

The Fear of the Lord

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

So we just concluded our series on the first ten books of the Psalms. So all you have to do is flip one book, maybe not one page, but one book to the book of Proverbs.

This wonderful book. So, book of Proverbs chapter 1, if you would go ahead and flip there, and we're going to dive into God's Word in just a moment by reading the first seven verses of the book of Proverbs.

So look with me there. Proverbs chapter 1, verse 1. It reads, Verse 7.

And the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

[1 : 56] It's the Word of God, the only infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word we will give our attention to this morning. May God bless it.

Yeah, what's your favorite verse in the chapter of Proverbs? Or, I mean, what's your favorite verse in the book of Proverbs? Maybe it's, Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways, acknowledge Him and make your path straight. That's been in many graduation videos. That and Jeremiah 29 11. Or possibly, Iron sharpens iron.

I lived with 11 guys in college, twice. And there was a whole lot of iron sharpening iron when someone stole another guy's macaroni or something like that. And so one man sharpens another. And so we like that. We like a little grind there, you know, when you're young and you need something. But as I got older, one of my favorites became, The heart of the man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

[2 : 54] Another place says, The Lord establishes his steps. How can man understand his way? I just love that. The Lord's doing it. And it's not, I'm not going to get it completely. And so, you know, the Proverbs is one of those books in the Bible we just love.

We love to quote it. You know, it's similar to the book of James. It's so blunt, so direct, so helpful. It's chock full of these crafty, clear, and helpful sayings of everyday life.

It talks about things that we think about and things we do. It talks about friends and plans and parents and self-control and anger and words. It's true.

It's true. It's true. There's some words talk in there and so much more in this little book. It comes to us in a section of Scripture called Wisdom Literature. In fact, Psalms are in there as well.

But these five books called Wisdom Literature. J.F. Packer sums up what Wisdom Literature tries to accomplish in a wonderful way. It says, Psalms teach us how to worship. Proverbs teach us how to behave.

[3 : 53] Job teaches us how to suffer. Song of Solomon, how to love. And Ecclesiastes, how to live. That gets it. Proverbs teach us how to behave. They teach us how to behave in a fallen world and all the details and decisions of daily life.

I think in so many ways, they get into the nooks and crannies of life. Derek Kidner, one of the great expositors, commentators, he said it like this, which I think we have for you.

He said, There are details of character small enough to escape the mesh of law. And that's a wonderful phrase, isn't it? The mesh of law and the broad sides of the prophets.

That's the hellfire and brimstone they brought. And yet the decisive in personal dealings. Proverbs moves in this realm. Asking what a person is like to live with.

Or to employ. How he manages his affairs. His time. And himself. That's good.

[5 : 03] Proverbs is about the details. It's less about what you sing on Sunday morning. More about what you say and do when no one else is watching through the week. And yet, it's not a book of manners.

You know, my mom used to talk about that little blue book of manners that would tell me where to put my napkin and which fork to use. Because we all get confused when there's more than one fork on the table. And which one to use and how to use them.

Which order to use them in or whatever. It's not a book trying to get you to do that. It's not even a book of rules. It's not as if checking the boxes guarantee a successful life. I feel that's how we often read it. Let me just keep my...

Let the Proverbs establishes guardrails and then everything good. The Proverbs is actually after something more. It gives us the key to life. And all the details.

While the wisdom it gives is very practical. It's God-centered. It's seeking to help us live carefully in the fear of God in God's world. Proverbs teaches us how not to be a fool.

[6 : 03] By teaching us how to fear God. And for this reason, I think we really need the book of Proverbs right now. This year has been a doozy.

And what we desperately need is the fear of God. We're beset on all sides. A pandemic, social upheaval over systemic racism, police brutality, whatever you take on that.

A most divided presidential election. I think they all say that every four years. This one's the one. But this one does feel like the one, if we're honest. A struggling economy.

And so many things. How's a Christian to walk? Which side are we on? What's fearing God look like? They're massive questions in the fear of God.

Or the book of Proverbs has so much to say. But wonderfully, the book of Proverbs is not just out there. It's coming home. The book of Proverbs tells us we're not slow to anger.

[7 : 10] We have a hard time trusting the Lord with finances and children. We talk too much. We don't like correction from our parents or our friends.

We're not always cheerful. We listen to slander and savor it secretly like chocolate. We lust. We eat too much.

We put off good things to tomorrow. So let's see the ant. Consider the ant. We've grown cold toward our spouse. We aren't fun.

We're always fun to be around. We need the fear of God. My definition of the fear of God is the fear of God is deep reverence and childlike awe that bids before the living God to listen, receive, and do everything to please Him.

I know that's a bit of a mouthful. But the fear of the Lord is deep reverence and childlike awe that bows before the living God to listen, receive, and do everything to please Him.

[8 : 22] And so we're going to try to break that out in three points as we look at these opening verses. The first is the title. There's kind of big headings here. The title. The first seven verses of the book of Proverbs, in many ways, are just an introduction to the book.

They introduce you to the whole book of the Proverbs. They're like a prologue. You know, one of the rules you should know in reading books, never skip the introduction or the conclusion because that's where all the good stuff is.

You know, in fact, if you want to do the CliffsNotes thing, just read the introduction and the conclusion, and then you can basically get the whole book. But don't tell your mom. I told you that. And we see this right here in this introduction.

The opening verses tell us kind of everything we need to know, and it begins with the author and the contents of the book. Look in verse 1. He says, the Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel.

It's a book of Proverbs. That's what it's saying right away. The word Proverbs comes from another word, which means to be like. So, the idea is that Proverbs, it derives it or it's packaged in such a way of comparisons, of kind of likening something to another thing.

[9 : 34] So, placing two things side by side. And so, that makes a lot of sense when we think about Proverbs because of the way they often come to us in these parallel, pithy lines. I mean, here's two examples from chapter 10.

He says, a wise son makes a father glad, a glad father. But a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother. And obviously, it's a sorrow to his dad too. But the point is, you see the pithy character of them and the power of them right next to each other.

The memory of the righteous is a blessing. That's what Dana Trott is experiencing this week. The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot. They kind of get your attention, don't they?

I mean, they're parallelism. If you remember when we went through the book of Psalms, there was lots of parallelisms. And this idea that line A leads into line B, and then line B says something back to line A.

And so, you see that really the meaning comes out in the way they relate to one another. But Proverbs aren't limited to parallels, as we'll see.

[10:42] You know, they're sermons. Really, I think Proverbs, the actual word came to mean any sage advice. So, any sage is a word for kind of a, I was going to say soothsayer, but that doesn't help.

Kind of, you know, a wise person who dispenses their wisdom. You know, you go pull up a chair. In fact, that's kind of been the history of the church. You know, you've needed wise men to guide the church and to come and receive wisdom.

And so, Proverbs, in many ways, just kind of anything that would package into that wisdom category that would help you and give you advice. And so, there's sermons. Chapter 5, there's a powerful sermon on the forbidden woman.

There are lists. You remember those seven things God hates. Seven things God doesn't understand. The way of man with his virgin is one of those things. Or a famous acrostic, even. Psalm 31, or Proverbs 31. The Proverbs 31 woman. It's an acrostic. You know, it's trying to lay out a complete woman by going through the Hebrew alphabet.

[11:41] And each sentence or each characteristic being begun with that word. You guys know the way acrostics work. But you get the idea. But the power is the brevity.

The power of Proverbs is its brief, direct, and memorable. I'm going to give one more quote introducing Proverbs. John Kitchen says it like this. I think this is just a good quote. I'd share. A proverb is a compactly constructed sentence packed with practical insight.

A lot of packing there. It's a stubby sentence pregnant with meaning. It's college in a cup. It's wisdom that you can carry with you as you walk through life.

That says it so well. And it's written by Solomon. Solomon. So, you guys, the book of Proverbs begins by identifying its primary author, which is Solomon. Solomon's not the only author of Proverbs, which we see later when he introduces the words of the wise, or Agur, or Lemieux. He introduces these guys. But Solomon is its primary author. He's the son of Israel. He's David's son. He's the third king of Israel. Now, if you know anything about biblical history, you might be a little bit surprised to see Solomon wrote a book on wisdom.

[13:01] Exhibit A, 700 wives and 300 concubines. I mean, how could this guy write a book on wisdom? I mean, at the very least, that doesn't seem like a good idea. But if you remember his story, it's just incredible.

I mean, you remember he became king. He was the third king. He was David's son. He was a great king. Hey, thank you, man. He became king. And he... Sorry, I got a little sidetracked there.

So, he becomes king. The Lord says, I'll give you whatever you want. Just ask for it. Remember that? Just a great story. I mean, Solomon thinks about it and what I want.

And he says, he responds quite humbly. He praises God for his steadfast love. He's kind of amazed that he's so gracious that he's a young man and he's the king. And so, he says, I'll ask for wisdom. Would you give me wisdom? And so, the Lord is just kind of so astounded that he asks for wisdom and not for riches or not for safety or not for long life. So, he says, I'm going to give you wisdom.

[14:05] I'm going to give you everything. And Solomon, the king just breaks out how massively blessed this man is.

And if you remember his wisdom right there in 1 Kings 4, he talks about his wisdom was unparalleled. And that vivid story talks about two women come to... Now, this is kind of a weird story. But two women come to Solomon and they both had babies in the same house with no one else there.

I don't know how that happened, but it happened. And one day, one baby was dead and the other one wasn't. And so, they both complained that... They both argued that that was their baby. And so, they said, give me back my baby.

And so, they went to Solomon as the wise man, the judge who was going to come and arbitrate this situation. And after he listened to the situation and he listened to them kind of present their case, he said, bring me a sword.

Let's just cut the baby in half and then you can share. Everybody gets their way, you know. Let's buy two Xboxes instead of one and everybody's happy. I mean, that's the way we think is the best way to do it. And of course, one woman said that was fine.

[15:10] The other one said, no way. Give the baby to the other woman. And immediately, Solomon said, that must be its actual mother. Yeah, neat story. So, the Lord gave Solomon what he wanted.

He blessed him. He was the greatest king in the history of Israel. Peace was unsurpassed. Blessing, financial blessing was unsurpassed.

He built a temple. He led the people in worship and he was renowned for his wisdom. That's part of what got him in trouble with Egypt. But in the end, he wrote 3,000 proverbs.

Likely before he turned from the Lord. But is it okay to listen to the teaching of someone who fell? Is it okay to listen to the teaching of someone who fell in one of the ways he warned us not to fall? In this culture, no.

[16:26] Once we dig through your life and find something unsatisfactory from our 21st century eyes, we're done with you. You're canceled and your monument's coming down. I mean, early this summer, and I'm not getting political, or at least I don't want to be, the president was about to address the nation from Mount Rushmore.

One of the reporters said, President Trump will be at Mount Rushmore in a few minutes, and where he will be standing in front of a monument of two slave owners and on land wrestled from the Native Americans.

Now, we used to be united in Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt doing some good things for the country, but not anymore. But listen, the Bible has very little trouble showing us all the flaws of our forefathers and yet calling us to give ear to their teaching and imitate their faith.

Otherwise, we've got to throw out Abraham, David, Naomi, Peter, Augustine, Luther, Edwards, and you. I mean, and me. You know, everybody's coming out.

So let's move past that and lean in to here. Point two, the purpose. The purpose. The purpose of this book is made clear in the following verses.

[17:38] Each of these verses, and you see, and I'm going to read them again right now, but you see the twos that are repeated through there. You see that to know wisdom, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction, to give prudence, to understand a proverb.

Verse six, the idea is that they're tying themselves back to verse one. So the idea is that the Proverbs of Solomon were written to know this. The Proverbs of Solomon were written to receive instruction.

The Proverbs of Solomon were written to give prudence. The idea is that it's kind of explaining exactly what the book of Proverbs is all about, what the purpose is. It's saying that the Proverbs were written to gain wisdom.

Wisdom, as we'll see in a few moments, is not simply knowledge or understanding. It's something more. My definition for us is going to be wisdom is shrewd skill for life in a fallen world.

Wisdom is shrewd skill for life in a fallen world. And Solomon, essentially in those verses, he's summing up the wisdom gain with ten characteristics of this wisdom, ten words about this wisdom in these verses.

[18:46] So he says, it's shrewd skill for every circumstance. That's the basic meaning of wisdom. Look in verse two, to know wisdom is skill in leading. This is the same word, wisdom, that was used of craftsmen crafting the temple in Solomon's day, whose skill was obvious before others.

The same thing used in Psalm, or the same idea in Proverbs 22, 29. Do you see a man skillful in this work? He'll stand before kings. He'll stand.

He will not stand before obscure men. The idea is that wisdom, this skillfulness, God does care about the way things are done, brings blessing, honor, and success.

It's not that you're kind of leaning on your talents or leaning on your gifts or something like that, but it's working hard to create success and beauty that is a mark of wisdom. But it includes understanding and knowledge into what really matters.

It includes understanding and knowledge in verse five and six and four. You see those, those words repeated. I mean, we've all met someone who has a lot of letters after their name and yet can't change a light bulb.

[19 : 52] Because knowledge is more than books. Knowledge is more than mere intellectual or academic learning.

This wisdom is greater. It's the ability to walk through a fallen world wisely. I had a friend of mine that, I mean, he would just, he was one of these guys so bright and yet would walk into very, very disastrous financial decision all the time.

And he would tell you, I'm not telling you anything he wouldn't tell you. It's just uncanny. I'm like, they just find you, man, and you say yes. You write the check and get yourself in all this kinds of trouble. Well, this man is not like that.

The idea is he sees between right and wrong, truth and error, understanding and folly. He knows God and knows what's needed to walk with God in this world.

So he's wise. He has understanding and knowledge. And when this is applied, it's wonderfully active. The wise person, look in verse two, it says he understands words of insight.

[21 : 03] The wise person has discretion. Verse four, the idea is he sees through the fog of this world's platforms and promises.

He sees through the glitz and glamour. He sees through the spin and the schemes. He's discerning. He's more Sherlock than Watson. Sherlock would just look at a man.

Watson wouldn't see anything. He'd see 25 things. He said, poor Watson is just elementary. The wise have insight. The wise, there's non-obvious things that are obvious to them because of their wisdom.

You see what I mean? And you know, in so many ways, this is the way mom and dads are. I mean, they seem to have those eyes in the back of their head. What are you doing? I saw that, you know. Why'd you throw gravy at your sister or something like that? They had those eyes in the back of their head.

They sniff out what we're up to a couple months ago on Instagram or something like that. And I saw this video of this dad watching his security camera while his kids thought they were sneaking out with no one knowing and noticing.

[22 : 08] I couldn't find it yesterday, but it was making me howl. I mean, this dad was just howling. And you're watching the video of the kids like kneeling down through this fence. And that's the way we always felt when we were kids, like trying to sneak out.

We thought we were so smooth, you know, sliding out the door and all those type things. And I remember one time we snuck out of my friend's house. This wasn't in the notes. Hopefully it ends well. And we were like, we were walking out of the yard with like duffel bags of just thousands and thousands of toilet paper.

And no, not thousands. That was really overstated, but lots. And several bags full of toilet paper.

And his mom had like, was laying in the minivan with the seat all the way back.

And like, we kind of walked past the car and she just immediately sits up. We're like, oh my God, it's a ghost, you know. And she's like, you're busted, man. You are so busted.

That's the way parents are. They have insight. They have wisdom. I mean, it's a reminder to us as parents.

[23 : 14] We should give our kids more and more responsibility, help them get on their own two feet and all that stuff, but let us not forget that the Lord has entrusted us with insight. Even more, it says prudence.

You know, I mean, who wants prudence? You know, I mean, who signed up for that virtue? I mean, no one down there in verse four, he says, he says prudence to give prudence to the simple. It sounds so old, strict, and undesirable.

The Beatles sang about prudence. Remember that? Dear Prudence, won't you come out to play? Dear Prudence, greet the brand new day. The sun is up, the sky is blue, it's beautiful, and so are you.

Come out to play. The idea is you are no fun. A better word is shrewd. Prudence, I think, has that craftiness in a no fun, stick in the mud sort of way, but shrewd is craftiness in a good way that the Bible commends.

It's wisdom at its most agile. And wisdom in a fallen world must be agile.

[24 : 21] We didn't know that the pandemic was coming down the pike this year, but wisdom doesn't freak out. I love it. It's adept.

It knows how to get the job done and succeed when everything's on the line with something it never saw coming. So wisdom is shrewd skill for success and fruitful in every circumstance, but wisdom is shrewd skill for anyone and everyone.

Wisdom comes through, it comes through words. It comes through instruction, words of insight, learning, understanding, a proverb, a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.

The idea, what he's trying to say and what he's trying to introduce, what the rest of the book will unpackage it. Wisdom comes through the ears. Wisdom comes through the eyes. Wisdom comes through the eyes. The emphasis on hearing and receiving words and instruction here is everywhere in the book of Proverbs.

It says, the hearing eye and the seeing ear. No, no, no. The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both. The accent is on the ear, even there.

[25 : 27] No one fails to see, but many fail to listen. Find someone who doesn't listen and you'll find someone who isn't wise. The Christian sees through his ears, is what Sinclair Ferguson says.

So the Lord gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason, you know. That's what my mom would remind me of. And so it comes through the ears and it comes through instruction. Look in verse 2. He says, to know wisdom and instruction. One author says, this is education through correction. It's the discipline of the Lord.

The correction of others. Ray Ortlund says it well. Sorry, friends, we are not born wise. We get into wisdom the hard way.

Through the Lord's instruction and discipline. Through being chastened and corrected. We don't like that. It's humiliating. It's hard to admit we're wrong.

[26 : 29] But we make progress in wisdom to the extent that we are teachable. We make progress in so many ways in wisdom to the extent that we're willing to admit we're wrong.

We can't benefit from the Lord until we're willing to admit this. The greatest sin in the book of Proverbs is unteachability.

The greatest sin in the book of Proverbs is being unable to hear. Unable to receive advice and help. Unable to be convinced of another's perspective. Unable to alter your decision regardless of what others say.

You know, it says, do you see someone wise in their own eyes? There's more hope for him than a fool. There's no hope for a fool. According to the book.

So the wise person loves correction. What about you? Do we avoid people we disagree with?

[27 : 32] Do we withdraw affection from people who we disagree with? I can't say I love correction.

I can't say I like it. But I've learned to benefit. You know, in fact, last night Kim and I were sitting on the couch. No one corrects me more than her. She just lowers the boom. No, I'm just kidding. She does sometimes.

But no one helps me more. Last night we were sitting on the couch working through some things. And I was being unhelpful. I'll leave it at that.

Not gracious with my words. And she kind of just looked at me and smiled. I mean, it was a corrective smile. Sometimes when you know somebody, that's all it takes.

Kind of a corrective adjustment of the body. And you're like, man. Okay. And then I repented. But she's helped me. The idea is that correction is what I need.

[28 : 35] It's what rescues me from making a massive fool of my life. But all of this is trying to say to us that wisdom can be learned. Like none of us is more than wise.

But we can all get wisdom. Wisdom is for anyone and everyone. Wisdom is a party that all are invited to. Come on over. Get wisdom. You'll see in the book of Proverbs, wisdom is a lady just crying out in the streets.

Would you come and be wise? All you have to do is bend your ear and you'll be wise. And so right there in verse 4, look down there. He says to give prudence to the simple. Now we don't like the word stupid, but that's what simple is there.

It's the gullible, the easily fooled, the simple minded. And yet shrewdness is given to them through wisdom. It gives knowledge and discernment to the youth.

And we know they don't have that, right? Because we felt like we know everything in the world when you're a teenager and you don't. You think you're so smart and you're not.

[29 : 37] And I was speaking to myself because I was one. But wisdom, knowledge and discernment is given to them. And more wisdom is given to the wise. Look down there in verse 5. Let the wise hear and increase.

One who understands obtain guidance. There's more and more wisdom. One of the fastest ways you can wreck your life is thinking you have nothing to learn. But if you become a learner, if you become a learner, if you're willing to be adjusted, you're willing to be helped, you can grow wise. It's incredible. Thirdly, the way. So the way, the purpose. Title, the purpose, the way. The way of wisdom and receiving all these blessings of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

You see it in the structure of these verses that verse 7 is set apart in a special way to give accent to it in this prologue of the book.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. So it's talked about knowledge up there in verse 2 and other places. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

[30 : 47] The fear of the Lord is massively important to the whole book. It bookends this opening section. As you see, the fear of the Lord is in 1, 7, but also in 9, 10, and 11.

9 verses 10 and 11. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. There you see it again. The knowledge of the Most High is insight. So wisdom brackets this section because the sayings of the wise begin in chapter 10.

But then it brackets or it bookends the whole book of Proverbs. Here and in chapter 31, at the very end, the climax of the prototypical woman, the great woman, the most complete woman.

Charm is deceitful. Beauty is vain. But a woman who fears the Lord is worthy to be praised. And so the fear of the Lord is the most important thing about this book.

And it's the way to wisdom. But what is the fear of the Lord? I think the relationship between the lines in that parallelism in verse 7 tell us.

[31 : 55] Look down there. It says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of a knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. And this word despise, I think, actually unpacks what the fear of the Lord is. Because despise is one of those strong negative words for refusing and hating something, being totally against something.

Not merely totally against something, but totally against anybody who's for that something. You know, that's what despise is. It's kind of a look down your nose type of word. I'm better than you type of word. In this case, the one who does not fear God looks down on knowledge and instruction. He assumes he has nothing to learn. He assumes he's already wise. He's wise in his own eyes. He's unteachable. Therefore, he doesn't fear God. Now, you've got to understand, connect these two.

How does that help us understand the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord, then, is not what we often think. We often think the fear of the Lord is terror.

He is the Lord. He's a consuming fire. We often think the fear of the Lord is some cringing dread that he's going to pounce on us because of something we did.

[33 : 11] Or some cowering fear. I mean, you've met people like that who seem to cower in every conversation. But that is not the way you need to relate to the Lord.

At its base, at its core, the fear of the Lord is an openness to wisdom. Now, that's pretty amazing. The fear of the Lord is a willingness to learn and receive. The fear of the Lord is an openness to the living God. I mean, obviously, the fear of the Lord, if it's an openness to God, if it's an openness to the Almighty, to the everlasting God, it's an openness that brings forth a willingness to surrender your whole life to Him.

The fear of the Lord is this attitude where you place your life and everything about you before Him. Now, it's a complex emotion.

It's deep reverence for God, the Almighty God, with childlike awe and surrender. One of the most stunning illustrations of the fear of the Lord, I think, in Scripture is in Luke 5.

[34 : 25] Y'all remember that story? Jesus is calling His disciples, and He comes. He teaches all night in the water, in a boat, just along the water, because everybody's rushing in at Him.

And He teaches, and then He says to Peter, He says, Peter, put out into the water and let down your nets. And Peter says, Lord, we toiled all night long.

Why should we put down our nets again? But it's because it's the Lord He obeys. And when He does, they just pull up this large number of fish, and the nets are beginning to break.

They call over another boat. Hey, hey, come over here. They pull in tons of fish into that boat, and they keep pulling on fish onto the boat until both boats begin to sink. It's this incredible scene. Do you remember what Peter did? When he saw it, he fell down at the Lord's feet in the boat. He said, depart from me.

[35 : 28] I'm a sinful man. He bows in the fear of God. You know, what happens there illustrates the fear of the Lord very well. He said, I know you're great in power, but I don't know why you're gracious to me.

In so many ways, honestly, the Lord is a terror until you get some of these things right. He is a terror. He is holy. He is righteous. He by no means will clear the guilty.

He pours out wrath. The wrath of God remains on anyone who does not know Jesus Christ, and so it's a very serious matter, and yet he calls us to come and look not to where the wrath of God is poured out on other human beings, but to look to where he put forward his Son to bear God's furious wrath in our place condemned.

He stood so that we might never bear his wrath on our own. And when we receive him as our Savior, then the complexity of that motion comes.

We say, I know you're great in power, but I don't know why you're gracious to me. I'm scared of you. I'm scared of you. And I don't know why you're gracious to me, but I'm all the way with you.

[36 : 40] That's a very casual way to say it, but I'm scared of you. I don't know why you've been gracious to me, but I'm with you to the end. That's what it is.

I'm leaning forward. The fear of the Lord is deep reverence and childlike awe that bows before the living God to listen, receive, and do everything to please him. The Proverbs says the fear of the Lord is key for several things.

One is that fearing God frees you from every other fear. Now, you think about this, and the reason we don't like the fear of God, and I think the reason we stumble over it and get weird about it when people say it is, is fear doesn't seem to be the right response to someone who gave his own son. Right? We think, how could that be right? It feels like a step in the wrong direction, right? Someone says, fear God. Shouldn't love be the beginning of wisdom?

Grace be the beginning of wisdom, but the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because only the fear of the Lord can conquer every other fear. Fear makes mountains, and you know this. You can make a mountain in a second in your heart.

[37 : 45] Fear keeps adding to the list of things you cannot do. It tells you all the things you cannot take if they happen to you, but fear falls before this fear. You may fear water, but you lose that fear quickly if your child is in danger of drowning.

You may fear running at night for your safety or something like that, but you'll run miles if danger is approaching. The idea is fear is conquered when we fear something greater, and that's what happens when we fear God.

Paul Tripp says it like this. It's one of the best quotes I've seen on this subject. The only truly practical and lasting solution to the fear of situations, locations, or people is the fear of God. Only fear of someone more powerful than what you are facing, and the assurance that this one of scary power has chosen to unleash his power for your benefit has the power to give you courage in the face of something or someone more powerful than you.

Let's take the fear of man. The fear of man lays a snare, the Proverbs say. Do opinions of others have too much effect on you? Do whether people wear a mask or not wear a mask have too much effect on you?

[39 : 01] Do you find yourself quick to wonder what others think about your decisions, your appearance, your job, your parenting skills? If so, you fear man. Join the club. I mean, it's a pit.

It's a snare. Yeah, so many ways. The first thing the Lord says to you when you fear man is not cheer up. You're a good guy. The first thing the Lord says to you when you're snared in the fear of man is not.

You are special too. The first thing he says is not you are smart and kind and important. The first thing the Lord says to you when you fear man is you're an idiot. In a Proverbs sense.

How's that for a self-esteem boost? You know, the Lord doesn't, you don't need a self-esteem boost. You're an idiot because you're fearing the wrong person. That's what the Lord would say. You're an idiot because you're fearing the wrong person.

That's why Jesus' statement makes so much sense. Don't fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Fear those who can destroy both body and soul in hell. So fear God. What is man?

[40 : 10] The Proverbs, I mean the Psalms say again and again. He's just flesh. He's just man. What you need to make it out of the fear of man alive is a healthy fear of God.

And there may be no more sin, more endemic of our culture than the fear of man.

What I mean by that, the craving to be noticed and approved and affirmed in ways that are elevated above the way God's approved and noticed and affirmed us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And fearing God opens the way to life. Man, we're running out of time. But the fear of the Lord just, it unloads benefits.

It unloads wisdom and knowledge. It gives confidence. It makes rich. It prolongs life.

[41 : 22] It is a fountain of life. It leads to life. It's rewarded with life. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil that God hates.

Though you may lose everything else, gain the fear of the Lord. John Kitchen says, is there anything else you want? Is there anything else you need?

The fear of the Lord is deep reverence, childlike all, that bows before the living God and lifts and receive and do everything to please Him. May God help us to do that. Father in heaven, we thank you for these few minutes to sit under your word.

We give you thanks and praise. Lord, I pray that you would help us to be people that don't squirm over this word, the fear of the Lord, this praise, but find in it our greatest delight.

That we would be like Peter who stand in wonder and amazement that you have sawed us and found us and have this unquenchable desire to please you in every nook and cranny of our life and every desire of our hearts.

[42 : 36] So come, Lord, and help us. Make us wise, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.

Thank you, Lord, and thank you for listening to our story, Bum Bum Bum