

Fearing God SL#1

Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 22:4

President Trump used the words "fire and fury" when he spoke of what would happen to North Korea if they used nuclear weapons. It made me think of the words in the Old Testament book of Isaiah which mention the coming fire and fury of God when he redeems the world. Fire and fury are fearful terms. We pray for peace, for sure. Yet, fear often enters our lives. The fire and fury made me think of another fear that we rarely speak of, and that's the fear of God.

The fear of God has been terribly misunderstood by many. To say we "fear" God does not mean we're afraid of Him; In fact, a good definition would be: *The fear of God is an awesome respect or reverence growing out of the greatness and power of God.*

For instance, I fear electricity. I'm not scared of it, because I'm around it every day. But, I sure do respect it's power!

We must understand and have a healthy fear of God if we are going to grow in our walk with the Lord.

Proverbs 1:7 says: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

In other words, the fear of the Lord is the starting point, the launching pad for knowledge. I think most of us want knowledge, most of us desire wisdom. To have the kind of wisdom and knowledge that comes from Him we must have a healthy fear of God.

The fear of God is not tucking our tail between our legs and running away. God doesn't want us to do that. He wants us to have an awesome respect and reverence for him and his power in our lives. And it begins with being able to....

1. Recognize Who God is. SL#2

Some time ago we had a new couple visit with us. I met them at the beginning of the service, but after the service was over I didn't see them exit but instead spotted them walking in the parking lot and so I chased after them calling them by what I thought was their name...and I called out to them and I yelled a little louder and they wouldn't turn around...just kept walking...only to discover when I finally caught up with them that I was calling them by the wrong name!

You've heard it said: "The sweetest sound to a person's ears is the sound of their own name." When we call someone by name, it tells them that we know them. We have some connection with them. We must do that with God. We must recognize who God is.

In fact, Regularly, we must tell God who He is.

Does God need it? Does God say, "Well, I didn't realize I was God. Thank you."

No. God doesn't need that... but we do. Because when I regularly recognize who God is, my pride takes a ride somewhere else, my ego melts. I realize that He is God and I am not.

But I am here to tell you something. If I don't regularly recognize who God is, if I don't give Him that significant place in my life, suddenly I think I am God. I think I am God

ruling over a universe called me.

And a lot of people today think they are God. They don't say it but they don't regularly recognize who God is. "I call the shots. I pull myself up by my bootstraps. I've made the money. I am in charge. I will determine my own destiny. I will forge my own future. I am God."

We must recognize who God is. Then and only then will we begin to have a healthy fear. And once we recognize who God is, we will discern and recognize the healthy balance between love and fear.

Psalm 118:4. *"Let those who fear the Lord say His love endures forever."* Fear and love are balanced.

Question. When was the last time you jumped on a seesaw? I used to love the seesaw at Bonner Park in Milledgeville. But it was frustrating. I was always a little husky in my childhood, so it would sometimes take two kids on the other side to balance it out!

A lot of us have an out-of-balance seesaw when it comes to God.

We don't recognize who God is and we don't recognize the critical balance between fear and love. If we fall too far on the fear side, we become legalistic.

"Can't smoke, can't cuss, can't drink, can't chew, can't run around with girls who do." Christianity is a bunch of rituals and regulations.

I've got to jump through this hoop, I have got to do this and do that. God might zap me with a heavenly thunderbolt. " A lot of people are on this legalistic trip.

Christianity is not a legalistic trip, it is a relationship.

On the other hand we can get the seesaw going so far on

the love side that we mess up. We think that God just loves us unconditionally. It doesn't matter how we live. "Well, I can just do whatever feels good, and if it's wrong, God will forgive. After all, God just loves me."

Yes, God does love us unconditionally but it is fear connected to love.

We need a balance between fear and love.

When I recognize who God is, I understand that God is God and I am not. I understand the delicate balance between fear and love.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY SLIDE #3

There is something else about Fearing God. Not only is it about recognition, it is also about accountability. **We need to be accountable to God.**

We are familiar with accountability. Take tax time for instance. That date we love to hate, April 15. We have to come clean before our government. We have got to give an account of our finances. We could file extensions, and delay the process, but at the end of the day we are going to have to face the music.

God, in His economy, has an April 15. He has a day of accountability. The Bible says that one day I will stand before Him and I will have to give an account.

Hebrews 4:13 *"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*

Romans 14:10-12 *"For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will*

confess to God. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."

Yes, even for the Christian, you and I will have to give an account before God. I am not referring to any punishment. Our punishment was taken on the shoulders of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. Our sins were forgiven and forgotten, past, present and future.

For the Christian, Jesus Christ himself, will be our advocate, our defender...the one who has paid the price for our sins. Yet, still the rewards of heaven will be given to those who deserve them.

We must be accountable for what we have done with God's blessing in our life. And this healthy accountability motivates me to live a life that's pleasing before God. Our accountability is "I am a sinner saved by grace. Jesus is my substitute - my savior. He died for me to make me right before God."

Sure, I still mess up. I strike out. I fumble and stumble. I am always thinking, though, about that accountability.

I have gifts and abilities given to me by God which I know I have and you have gifts and abilities and blessings given to you by God which you know you have. When we don't use our God-given gifts and miss opportunity after opportunity to serve Him, we are missing out on his blessings.

In this life we are accountable to our government, our employers, our spouses, and our families. But, we must first be accountable to God. And when we are, and have that healthy awesome respect for Him, then everything else

falls into place.

3. Then we need to **have a Willingness to Follow God's Plan. SLIDE #4**

Having a healthy fear of God is about a willingness to go by God's game plan. It is a willingness to obey, to do what He says. The most powerful man, financially, to ever live was a man talked about in the Old Testament, Solomon.

For forty years, Solomon indulged in power and pleasures and possessions like no one ever will. Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and Donald Trump couldn't even carry his wallet. Someone has figured that if Solomon constructed his house again today it would cost 200 billion dollars. He had 700 concubines. He memorized 2,005 Proverbs.

He was the man of the hour, the toast of the town.

Seemingly, he had it all. But after burning up four decades of his life, being an older man, he looked back in the rear view mirror and he penned these words, which are so relevant.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind."

"Now all has been heard..." And believe me, with Solomon, you just read it as it is, he did it all. Here is the conclusion, the overall results of everything he had learned, written, or done, "...**fear God**..." that's recognition, accountability *...and keep His commandments...* a willingness to go by His game plan, *"...for this is the whole duty of all mankind."* God preserved the words and the thoughts and the journeys of Solomon so that we wouldn't have to go there. Are you going by God's game plan? God simply wants willing

warriors. He wants people who say, "God, I want to do it your way. I'm not going to be my own little god ruling over a universe called me. You are God. I am not. You have the master plan for me that is the best. I want to do what you want me to do."

We don't know what to do unless we know God's game plan. And God's design for us is revealed in the Bible. We must seek Him, stay in His word and depend on Him to guide our every step.

The fear of God is the one fear that removes all others. When we yield to Him, He removes all of our fears....SL#5
Isaiah 41:10

*So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Fear the Lord and find out the truth that HE removes all your fears!