

"WALKING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD"

Acts 9:31

INTRODUCTION

1. In writing about the early church, Luke recorded:

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." (Ac 9:31)

Note that they were **"walking in the fear of the Lord"**!

2. In writing to the church at Philippi, Paul told them:

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" (Ph 2:12)

3. The concept of **"fear and trembling"** in connection with God is not a popular concept today

- a. People prefer to hear about God's love, longsuffering and mercy
- b. Sometimes, when we point out God's righteous indignation, holiness, and justice, people reply "My God is not like that!"

4. The emphasis on God's love and mercy today is probably a reaction to the "hell, fire, and brimstone" preaching of another generation

5. But could it be that we have gone to other extreme?

- a. Where there is no concept of "fear and trembling" as it relates to the Christian?
- b. Could this be why many Christians are apathetic in their service?
- c. Could it be we have forgotten whom we should fear if we are negligent in our service? - cf. **Mt 10:28**

6. In this lesson, I hope to accomplish three things:

- a. Define the "fear of the Lord"
- b. Point out why the "fear of the Lord" is important to the Christian
- c. Suggest how we can develop a healthy "fear of the Lord" without going to one extreme or the other

[We begin by...]

I. DEFINING THE "FEAR OF THE LORD"

A. THE WORD "FEAR"...

1. In the Hebrew, the word is "**YIR'AH**" and is used in the Old Testament to describe:
 - a. fear, terror
 - b. awesome or terrifying thing (object causing fear)
 - c. fear (of God), respect, reverence, piety
2. The Greek word is "**PHOBOS**", and it is used to describe:
 - a. fear, dread, terror
 - b. that which strikes terror

B. IN CONNECTION WITH THE "FEAR OF THE LORD", IT IS OFTEN DEFINED AS

"REVERENCE" OR "AWE"...

1. Which is fine as far as it goes...
2. But I wonder if this definition truly goes far enough...
3. For though the terms "reverence" and "awe" imply a place for "trembling", do most people make the connection?

C. THE "FEAR OF THE LORD" SHOULD INCLUDE A PLACE FOR "TREMBLING"!

1. Even as Paul indicated in **Ph 2:12**, by combining "fear and trembling"
2. The Greek word for "trembling" is "**TROMOS**" and means "a trembling or quaking with fear"
3. Just as one would likely tremble in the presence of one who could take our life, so Jesus taught us to fear the Lord
- **Mt 10:28**

D. A PROPER "FEAR OF THE LORD" WOULD THEN INCLUDE...

1. "reverence and awe..."
2. "**being afraid to offend God in any way**" - HENDRICKSEN
3. A trembling and quaking if one knows they have offended God and have not obtained forgiveness! - cf. **He 10:26-27, 30-31; 12:28-29**

[The value of such an attitude is seen as we continue on and now notice...]

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE "FEAR OF THE LORD"

A. FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, WE LEARN...

1. The "fear of the Lord" is the beginning of knowledge - **Pr 1:7**
2. The "fear of the Lord" will cause one to hate evil - **Pr 8:13**
3. The "fear of the Lord" will prolong life - **Pr 10:27**
4. The "fear of the Lord" provides strong confidence and is a fountain of life - **Pr 14:26-27**
5. The "fear of the Lord" prompts one to depart from evil - **Pr 16:6**
6. The "fear of the Lord" leads to a satisfying life, and spares one from much evil - **Pr 19:23**
7. The "fear of the Lord" is the way to riches, honor, and life! - **Pr 22:4**

B. WITHOUT THE "FEAR OF THE LORD"...

1. We close ourselves to the treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge!
2. We will flirt with evil and be corrupted by it
3. Our lives are likely to be shortened by our refusal to heed God's word (e.g., suffering sexually transmitted diseases because we did not heed His Word on sexual relationships)
4. We will not come to know the love of God that gives us assurance and confidence of our salvation
5. When fallen into sin, we will not be motivated to repent and turn to God!
6. We will not be motivated to truly "work out our own salvation"!

[Without the "fear of the Lord", we cannot please God (cf. **Is 66:1-2**). Only the person who "trembles at His Word" has God's promise to receive His tender mercy! (cf. **Ps 103:17-18**).

But how does one develop the proper "fear of the Lord" without going to the extreme of earlier generations?]

III. DEVELOPING THE "FEAR OF THE LORD"

A. THE "FEAR OF THE LORD" COMES THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD!

1. Just as "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (**Ro 10:17**), the same can be said for the "fear of the Lord"!
2. Notice **Deu 31:10-13**, where the children of Israel were told to gather every seven years to read and hear the Word...
3. The purpose? **"...that they may learn to fear the Lord"!**
4. As one reads the Word of God, they should gain a healthy degree of the "fear of the Lord"

- a. Consider the words of Paul in **Ro 2:4-11**
- b. Or how about the words of Peter in **2 Pe 3:7-14**

B. THE WORD OF GOD, PROPERLY USED, WILL MAINTAIN A PROPER BALANCE...

1. It is important to emphasize, however, that to avoid extremes, we must read ALL of God's Word
 - a. Some read only those portions will reveal God's love and mercy, and have no "fear of the Lord"
 - b. Others emphasize the "fire, hell and brimstone" passages, and know nothing of God's everlasting lovingkindness
 - c. The one develops an attitude of permissiveness that belittles God's holiness and justice
 - d. The other develops a psychosis of terror that forgets God's grace and compassion
2. Even in the passages noted above, the context of each speaks much of God's grace and forgiveness for those who will repent!
3. So we must be careful how we use the Word of God, but use it we must!

CONCLUSION

1. The Psalmist said...

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all [them that are] about him." (Psalms 89:7)

2. Why do we need to "fear the Lord"? So we will be sure to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling"!
3. The warning is necessary, for as it is written in Hebrews:

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left [us] of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard [it]." (Hebrews 4:1-2)

And again...

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (Hebrews 4:11)

4. With the proper "fear of the Lord", we will "work out our

salvation", we will "labour...to enter into that [heavenly] rest"!

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Co 7:1)

Are you "perfecting holiness in the fear of God"?