

“It Will Be Well With Those Who Fear God”

Sermon Notes

- **Not to overstate it - but nothing matters more in this life than comprehending and cultivating the fear of the Lord**

Ecclesiastes 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 12:13

*So let's...

1. Understand the error of those who reject the fear of the Lord (vv.10-12a, 13; Romans 3:18)

2. Enjoy the advantages of those who embrace the fear of the Lord (v.12b; Psalm 111:10; 25:14; Luke 1:50; Psalm 34:9; 145:19; Proverbs 14:27)

Next Week: Ecclesiastes 8:14-9:6

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of February 21st-27th

For our Community Group study, let's read, discuss and seek to apply this article from biblical counselor Ed Welch called: "The Fear of the Lord...for Today?"¹ What strikes you as particularly helpful for your life right now? At home, in the church, school, work, or in the community?

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). These words from the apostle John tell us that love replaces—it casts out—fear. At first glance, this seems to put the biblical command to "fear the Lord" in jeopardy. But John is writing to those who fear judgment even after confessing their sins. He is not undercutting the importance of the fear of the Lord in our lives or suggesting that such fear was part of a fading, law-oriented era.

Yet, the fear of the Lord remains unclear for most of us, and it is critical to embrace it if we are to grow in wisdom (Pro 1:7). Let's assume that we benefit from understanding it, and we could use more of it.

The basic idea is that the Lord is with us and he is also over us. He is the great and Holy God and is to be feared. This is a good fear because whatever we fear controls us. When we fear the Lord, we are controlled by him and his words. In short, we do what he says. We can pick out his voice from all the competition. And we certainly need to hear it. When we bow to sinful temptations, we usually ignore the Lord or justify ourselves with "this will be the last time." To stand against strong temptations, we need something quite powerful. God's voice is perfect for such times. It strikes fear in our hearts.

This fear is at the center of Moses' final sermons in Deuteronomy (e.g., 4:10, 5:29, 6:2). In his first sermon, Moses chose to teach the fear of the Lord with the story of how Israel met their God at Sinai.

You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. (Deut 4:11-12)

Moses wants us to remember this—to almost relive it—or at least imagine it. The Lord is not a superpowered human. He is not a local god. He is the Holy One. He is not just greater than us. He is different.

So we look more carefully at the mountain. The Lord's descent to the mountain was preceded by careful preparation and exacting instructions (Ex 19). The people had to be purified; no one could touch the mountain unless they were invited further up. When the Lord descended there was thunder, lightning, fire everywhere, thick smoke, trumpet blasts, and the mountain shook violently.

Picture it—a fire that does not consume. Moses saw this on a smaller scale when he saw the burning bush. He took his shoes off in respect. What do you do when an entire mountain is ablaze? For now,

¹ <https://www.ccef.org/the-fear-of-the-lord-for-today/> . Accessed 2/19/21 @ 9:45am.

you stand transfixed and are filled with awe. You have never felt more alive. Then you feel the earth move, and lightning is so close your hair stands up.

You are captivated by this event like no other. You hear a voice but see no form. The Lord has his reasons for this. Some of it has to do with the human tendency to make idols or images of God. When people make idols, things don't go well. Both the Lord's presence and form would be revealed later, in Jesus.

Jesus is God-on-the-mountain who came down to be with us. Through him, signs and wonders continued. People were often amazed, which is a good beginning for the fear of the Lord. One of Mark's early stories of amazement is when Jesus is asleep in a storm.

And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:38-41)

This is a good start on the fear of the Lord, but it is not enough in itself. For Moses, the fear of the Lord was inseparable from God's promise that Israel was his treasured possession. His awe, wrapped in love, led to a response. Moses believed the Lord more than his own fears. He lived under the God of great love and great power. "You, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving" (Ps 62:11-12).

This reminds me of some of the best relationships between athletes and their coaches. The beloved and effective coaches unite love and authority. They love their athletes, and they are also totally in charge. The coaches lead, the athletes follow.

We aim for something similar with the Lord. The better we know him, the more we see an intensity of love and majesty, of mercy, and infinite power. From his throne comes both gentleness and "flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder" (Rev 4:5). And you can't decide whether to fall down and worship or rush in and touch him.

You do both. That's fear of the Lord for today.