

Proverbs 1:7

~ The Fear of the LORD ~

Introduction

When was the last time you heard someone described as a *God-fearing person*?

That kind of language may sound **overly distant** to our **modern evangelical** hearing – but **there was a time** in which that kind of language **simply referred** to:

A bible believing Christian

One who was serious about following the Lord Jesus Christ!

And yet **safe to say** this kind of language has:

Fallen out of favour with the modern evangelical movement!

It's fallen out of favour with the modern-Church!

Now one of the reasons for this shift **away from** the Fear of the Lord is because I believe many **pastors** in the church **have failed** to educate their people in the pews...

They have failed to educate their members **in their churches** on the **really hard topics** of the bible – topics like:

The Fear of God!

Judgement!

Wrath!

Holiness!

Hell!

Eternity!

God's sovereignty!

Election!

Predestination & Providence!

The role of women in the church!

The role of women in the home!

The role of women in general!

Faith!

Repentance!

Gender!

Marriage!

Parenting!

These are all topics that (**along with the Fear of the LORD**) have been **softened** or **capitulated** upon from the modern pulpit!

Common Theme

And yet I wanna that this topic before us:

*The fear of the LORD is a **pervasive theme** given throughout the bible!*

It is a topic that echoes from the book of Genesis **all the way** to the book of Revelation!

And we could **go to places** like Genesis 22 where Abraham is **about to kill** his one and only son – and the Angel of the Lord appeared to Abraham and says:

*Do not stretch your hand against the boy, for now I know that you **fear God**...*

And in Revelation chapter 15 the song **that is sung** in the throne-room of heaven says:

*Great and marvellous are your deeds O Lord and who will not **fear** and **glorify** your name?*

So this is a theme that spans the entire storyline of the bible – from Genesis to Revelation the message that we get – is that:

*The fear of the Lord is **the beginning of knowledge** – and the fear of the LORD is the **beginning of wisdom**...*

Foundation

Now when Solomon says the fear of the LORD is the **beginning** of knowledge what he's saying there is that:

The fear of the LORD is the **first** and **foremost** principle (the foundation) upon which **everything else** in the Christian life stands!

So it's **first** in terms of **principle** – **NOT first** in terms of *starting with* but then *leaving behind*!

It's **NOT like** the starting block of a race that a runner **leaves behind** the further they get down the track – rather the Fear of the LORD is:

The **beginning** – the **middle** – and the **end** of the Christian journey!

Beginning/End

Maybe we can think of it like this – if I said to you that:

*The ABC'S are the **beginning** of reading* – does that mean that there **ever comes a point** in which we abandon the ABC'S?!?!

Like when it comes time to reading Shakespeare – is there ever a point in which you move beyond the basics of the ABC'S?!?!

NO – the **more we grow** in our knowledge of reading – the **more we depend** upon the ABC'S!

You **never outgrow** your **knowledge** of the ABC'S!

Marriage

Or what if I said this:

Sacrificial love is the **beginning** of marital happiness – but does that mean that we need to **outgrow our need** to be sacrificial and the longer we are married?!?!

NO!

If anything we need to be **more sacrificial** and **loving** the longer we grow in our marriage and love for our spouse!

And it's **the very same thing** for the fear of God!

The fear of God is what **notes** are to **music** – or **numerals** to **mathematics** – the **ABC'S** to **reading**!
The fear of God is **NOT only** the beginning point of the Christian life – but it is the **very thing** upon which the entire Christian life is **built** and **sustained**!

There is **never a point** as a Christian in which we **move beyond** our need of fearing God!

The fear of the LORD is the **beginning** – the **middle** – and the **ending** of all Christian theology – practice – and wisdom!

This is why John Murray (the famous theologian) said that:

*The fear of God is **the soul of godliness**...*

It's what frames and produces everything else in the entire Christian life!

John Owen the Puritan pastor likewise said – that:

The fear of the LORD means the whole worship of God...

Knowledge/Wisdom

This is why Solomon in our text says that:

*The fear of the Lord is **the beginning of knowledge**... and the beginning of wisdom!*

Solomon was showing us that knowledge & wisdom **work together** in such a way that:

Our knowledge of God drives our **wisdom of God**

When a person has a **sufficient knowledge** of the LORD His **word** – His **ways** – and His **will** – and that person **takes that knowledge** and **applies it** to everyday living – the bible says that:

That person is demonstrating the truth of godly wisdom!

This is what we saw last week in our opening sermon – that:

*The essence of biblical wisdom is the practical knowledge/the know-how of following **God's word** while living in **God's world**!*

Godly wisdom comes from a lifetime **reflection** on the experiences of life (that's the sphere of God's **world**) – and a **careful study** of His **word** (that's the revelation of Himself)...

And those **2 areas** that **come together** for *skilful godly living* is what the bible refers to as:

Godly Wisdom!

In fact I was reading a **commentary this week** on the book of Proverbs from a pastor named Warren Wiersbe – he was a Baptist pastor in the late 20th century – and he said:

*Wisdom keeps us in harmony with the **principles** and **purposes** that God has built into His world...so that as we obey God [as we enjoy God in His world], everything works **for us** and not against us. This **doesn't mean** that we **don't** experience trials and tribulations in life, because trials are a normal part of the Christian experience. But it does mean that we have the ability [and knowledge] to deal with these trials so that we grow spiritually and the Lord is glorified...*

And this is **what Solomon** is trying to communicate through this idea of wisdom!

If wisdom is what we saw last week as **being a priceless possession** in which we need to **get serious** about getting:

Then verse 7 is how to get it!

Verse 7 is **the key**!

It's the **beginning** of our wisdom!

In fact, someone once said that if we were to **take the book of proverbs** (and take **all of its content**) – and we squeeze it down **into the palm** of our hands...

We take this book and we **boil it down** into one **single solitary concept**:

Verse 7 is what remains!

Verse 7 is **the key** to unlocking the entire book of Proverbs!

Before we can understand **money** – and **marriage** – and **children** – and **parenting** – and **sex** – **discipline** – **politics** – **people** – **princes** – **kings** – **rulers** – **officials** – and **10,000 other** topics of our day to day living– we **must begin** at the beginning of wisdom – we first have to begin at the fear of the LORD!

If we don't get verse 7 then we **don't understand** the book of Proverbs!

If we don't understand the book of Proverbs – we will **NOT** get wisdom!

If we do **NOT get wisdom** then we will **be the fool** that the book of Proverbs 1 warns us about!

And so this is **the Proverb** through which **every other proverb** finds its origin – it's source – it's meaning – and significance!

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction...

Main Point

And so the main point that we're gonna see as we come to Proverbs chapter 1 verse 7 here this morning – is this:

The fear of the LORD is the sum and substance of the entire Christian life!

Outline

2-point outline:

The **Nature** of fearing God!
&
The **Necessity** of fearing God!

Or if you like:

What is the Fear of the Lord? – It's **Nature**

And why do we need the fear of the LORD? – It's **Necessity**

Proverbs 1

So proverbs chapter 1 – and let's read again the first 7 verses to set the scene of Solomon's wisdom – Solomon writes:

The Proverbs of Solomon son of David, King of Israel: ² For learning wisdom and discipline; for understanding insightful sayings; ³ for receiving prudent instruction in righteousness, justice, and integrity; ⁴ for teaching shrewdness to the inexperienced, knowledge and discretion to a young man— ⁵ let a wise person listen and increase learning, and let a discerning person obtain guidance— ⁶ for understanding a proverb or a parable, the words of the wise, and their riddles. ⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline...

Opening Gambit

One of my favourite **living theologians** today is a man by the name of Douglas Wilson who has a powerful quote that I think captures the essence of biblical wisdom and the fear of the LORD – he says:

The graveyard of all fear is the fear of the LORD...

That's where **all other fears** go to die – in this **one grand narrative** of Scripture – in the fear and reverence of the LORD!

Biblical Concept

A simple study of the phrases *the fear of God*/or *the fear of the LORD* will demonstrate that that there are **no less than 150 times** that we find **this phrase** given in the bible!

*And when you couple (one pastor says) those **specific references** to illustrations and admonitions of fearing God (without actually using that phrase itself) it **totals up to hundreds & hundreds of times** that God's people are called to fear Him!*

And so it's obvious then that the fear of the LORD is a **major theological topic** given in the bible! The reason the fear of the LORD is a **major theological topic** – is because the God of the Bible:

Is a fearful being!

Just listen to what **Psalm 89** verses 6 & 7 tells us about the fear of the LORD – the author writes:

*For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? And who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, a God **greatly to be feared** in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around Him?*

Hebrews 10:31 says that:

*It is a **fearful thing** to fall into the hands of the living God...*

And of course Zephaniah in **Zephaniah chapter 1** speaks of what this fearful **expectation & experience** of God will be like **for the nations** on the Day when they meet Him in His **judgment & wrath...**

Just listen to what Zephaniah 1 says:

The great day of the LORD is near... near and hastening quickly...A Day of wrath is that day, a day of anguish and distress, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. [And then Yahweh declares] that I will bring distress on [all] mankind, and they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of His jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end He will make of all the inhabitants of the earth...

A **full** and **sudden** end He will make!

I mean just listen to the words that Zephaniah uses:

Wrath – anger – judgment – anguish – distress – ruin – devastation – darkness – gloom – blood –
dust – flesh – dung – fire – fury!

Lightened Language

That's probably **NOT** a sermon that is **rising** to the height of popularity in today's modern Churches...even the ones **holding to the bible** as their authority are **NOT highlighting** the wrath and holiness of God these days!

In fact I remember a time **NOT too long ago** when I was preaching a sermon on Zephaniah 1 here at **this church**...and I remember someone coming up to me **BEFORE the sermon began** (during the worship) – dragging me outside – **begging me to go easy** on the topic of judgement!

Because I had titled the sermon after Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon:

Sinners in the hands of an angry God...

And so this was a brother pleading with me **NOT to preach** the sermon in a way that will terrify people against the wrath and holiness of God!

So this is **NOT** a theme or a topic that is rising to the height of popularity **even amongst** many evangelical Churches (and Christians in those churches) today!

Old Testament

And yet the irony is **as I said** this topic is a **major theological theme** given in the bible!

We've already seen it read multiple times in Proverbs chapter 1 this morning:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...

Proverbs 9:10 says:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...

David prays in Psalm 86:

*Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; and unite my heart **to fear** your name...*

Isaiah says that:

*The fear of the LORD is his treasure...in **Isaiah 33** verse 6!*

Job's faithfulness is summed up when he is described as:

*An upright man who fears the LORD... **Job chapter 1 verse 8!***

Psalm 34:7 says:

*The angel of the LORD encamps around those **who fear Him**, and delivers them...*

Psalm 111 repeats what the book of Proverbs says:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and all those who practice it have good understanding...

Finally then in **Psalm 128** the Psalmist declares:

*Blessed are all those who **fear the LORD** and walk in the obedience of His ways...*

So there is a kind of blessing that the Psalmist says comes to those who the fear the LORD and walk in His ways!

The great divide for the **entire human race** is between those who Fear God and those who do **NOT!**

New Testament

And **that divide** isn't **something** just spoken of in the Old Testament – but also highly spoken of in the New Testament!

In Luke chapter 1 Mary's Magnificat declares:

*God's mercy is from generation to generation on all those who **fear Him!***

Jesus in Luke 18 describes the **unrighteous judge** as one who:

Neither feared God nor respected man...

In fact it's **repeated twice** in that passage to underscore that He was unrighteous **because** he **did** **NOT fear** the LORD nor did he respect his fellow image bearers!

Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 7 says:

*Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion **in the fear of God...***

Paul says that unless we fear God our holiness is **NOT** completed – and it will be a **lacking holiness!**

Colossians 3:22:

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters...fearing the Lord!

And of course, Jesus famously said in Matthew 10:28 when speaking to the disciples:

*Do **NOT** fear those who kill the body but **cannot kill** the soul; rather, **fear Him** who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell...*

Now on another occasion in Luke chapter 12 – Jesus made a **similar point** but even **more deliberate** when speaking to the crowds in Galilee – He says:

*I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵ But I warn you **of whom** you are to fear: **fear Him** who, after He has killed, has the authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you to **fear Him!***

The **primary command** in both **Old and New Testaments** when it comes to the nature & character of **who God is** – is to **recognize Him rightly** – to **fear Him greatly** – and to **obey Him supremely!**

Why?!?!?!?

Because our God is a consuming fire – Hebrews 12:29!

And because **Hebrews 10** says that:

Our God is a fearful Being!

Wrong Definitions

Which begs the most obvious question:

What does it actually mean to fear the LORD?!?!?

I mean we know that these Scriptures are commanding us to fear – but what does that actually mean?!?!

Well, it's interesting that if you look up most commentators today – most people in the **evangelical world** are going to define the fear of God with words like:

Reverence!

Respect!

Adoration!

Submission!

Honour!

Love!

Devotion!

Something to that effect!

And please hear me when I say that I'm certainly **NOT against** any of those words or definitions – I just think they **woefully handicap** our perception of:

Fearing God!

It's definitely **NOT any less** than those things – but it's certainly **much more** than those things!

Right Definitions

And so I'm gonna take a wild stab here and say that *the Fear of the LORD* means (you're **NOT gonna** believe this) – the fear of the LORD **actually means:**

To Fear the LORD

Reverence/respect/adoration – are **NOT the kind** of things that cause us to **tremble!**

They're **NOT the kind** of things that cause us to **fear!**

Because when you read **in the bible** human beings that **come and encounter** the living God:

THEY TREMBLE!

BECAUSE **GOD. IS. HOLY!**

He is a **FEARFUL** Being!

A **JEALOUS** Being!

AND an **AWEFUL** Being!

And I mean that in the **old school sense** of **producing awe** in us!

Our God is a consuming fire!

He is a terrifying reality!

A fearful Creator!

He is of purer eyes than to look upon evil!

And He dwells in unapproachable light!

And He is the HOLY HOLY HOLY God of Isaiah 6!

And men and women fall to their knees when they come face to face with the presence of this living
God!

To recognise God as a fearful Being – is **the beginning** of fearing God!

Joy

And then **within that recognition** of His fearful expectation and holiness of sin – we **also come to see** that **in Jesus Christ** He is a God of absolute **mercy** & **grace** for those who take refuge in Him!

And so **this is what it means** to fear the LORD – to reverence the LORD – to worship the LORD!

The fear of the LORD has **both** an element of **tremble** and **rejoicing**!

It is both a **fearful expectation** of His holiness – and a **joyful expectation** of His love!

It is both a **repelling** away from Him – and a **drawing-near** to Him!

And it includes things like:

Tremble!
Trust!
Reverence!
Rejoice!
Quiver!
Shake!
Comfort!
Adore!
Delight!
Obey!
Behold!
And worship!

It includes things like Psalm chapter 2:

*Serve the LORD with **fear** and **rejoicing**...*

Now how are you supposed to **both** fear the LORD and at the same time **rejoice** in the LORD?!?!

How do these two things go together!

Well the answer of course is what Psalm 2 tells us:

Kiss the Son, lest you perish in the way – because blessed are those who take refuge in Him!

So the fear of the LORD **according to Psalm 2** includes both:

A **trusting** in the Son – and a **trembling** in the Son!

It is both a **rejoicing** in the Son – and a **shuttering** in the Son!

A **kissing** of the Son – **taking refuge** in the Son!

Tremble and Trust

This is what it means to fear the LORD:

*To fear the LORD means to both **tremble** at His power and to **trust** in presence*

John Piper

And I think John Piper in his book *the Pleasures of God* has the **best illustration** of this paradox when he describes the following scene – he says:

*Do you hope in the one you fear and fear the one that you hope in? Suppose for a moment you were exploring an unknown glacier in North region of Greenland in the **dead of winter**. Just as you reach a sheer cliff with a spectacular view for miles and miles of jagged ice – a **terrible storm** begins to occur!*

*The wind is so strong that the fear rises in your heart that it might blow you over the edge. And so in the midst of that **terrifying storm** you discover **a cleft in the ice below**. Here you feel safety. Here you feel security. But even though you are secure, the **awesome might** of the storm outside **rages on!***

*And you begin to watch this storm from the cleft – but now you start to feel **a trembling pleasure***

*At first there was the fear that this storm would claim your life – but now **in this cleft** you gained the hope of safety!*

*But **NOT everything** in your heart has vanished in terms of **fear and dread!***

*For there also remains [at the very same time] the **knowledge of the fact** that you would never want to tangle with such a storm or be the adversary of such a power!*

Still Fear

Brothers and sisters this is what it means for the **Christian in Christ** to fear the LORD!

When this great God of glory **draws us to Himself** – He reconciles us in Christ:

And we become His children – He becomes our Father!

And He **lavishness His love** upon us as sons and daughters of God!

But **at the same time** the knowledge of that love – and the knowledge of that grace in no way begins to **diminishes** His holiness – or **dissipates** our fear!

Because our God **still remains**:

A consuming fire!

He's **still** Holy!

He's **still** transcendent!

He's **still the one** who **kills Corinthian Christians** for partaking of communion in an **unworthy manner**!

And He kills Christians like Ananias and Saphira for lying to the Holy Spirit and deceiving the people of God!

That's New Covenant Christianity friends

That's **NOT** in the Old Testament – That's in the New Testament!

And so there must remain for the people of God a **healthy** – **holy** – and **happy** fear knowing that He is the God of:

Holy Transcendence and fury

And this this is the **driving force** behind the fear of God within the book of Proverbs!

The fear of God drives our hearts **NOT** from Him – but **toward** Him!

To **serve Him** and to **love Him** with every fibre of our **fearful** being!

Perfect Love

Now it's **at this point** that I anticipate an objection from **some in the pews** asking the question:

But what about 1st John 4:18?

Doesn't that text say that the **perfect love** of God casts out our fear – 1st John 4:18 says:

*For 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...*

First of all, the fact that we have this verse alongside **all the other verses** we've just **read** – means that whatever **1 John 4 is saying** – it's **NOT** contradicting those other verses!

It's **NOT** saying that because of 1st John 4 – the fear of God is **no longer** a reality in the Christian life!

You **can't take** one verse and then somehow **trump it over** all the other verses in the Bible!

This verse **doesn't contradict** or make void all those other verses commanding us to fear the LORD!

Punishment

But secondly 1st John 4:18 **clearly tells us** what the verse is saying:

*Perfect love casts out the **fear of punishment** – it **doesn't cast** out the fear of God but the fear of God's punishment, His judgement, His condemnation & His wrath!*

Obviously then the Bible speaks of **2 different kinds** of fear:

There is the fear of a servant toward his demanding taskmaster!

What we might call a *servile/or slavish fear*!

This is the **fear** that a criminal has toward a judge because the **criminal knows** that his crimes ultimately deserve justice!

He dreads him – he is terrified of him – terrified **by the fear** of what this man might do to him if he fails him!

This is the fear that Adam & Eve had **in the garden** because they feared the judgement of God!

They failed God – they broke His laws & commandments!

Gospel Fear

But at the same time the bible speaks of a *gospel fear* or a *joyful fear* – what we might call:

A Filial fear/ or a family fear.

It comes from the Latin phrase *filius* meaning 'a Son or daughter!'

So this is a fear that is born **NOT** out of fear of judgement – but of love!

This is a fear that a son has toward his *powerful loving father* – a father he **deeply loves** and respects **to his core!**

The son is moved by the father's *goodness* – he is touched by the father's *kindness* – and he obeys from the father's *greatness*!

He **doesn't** want to **disappoint** his father – he **doesn't** want to **disrespect** his father – **and so** he obeys his father out of a **loving fear** and **trust** for him!

Point 2

And so **what's the connection** between:

The fear of God & the wisdom of God?

Between the fear of God and the **blessings** of God?

If Proverbs 9 says that:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom – **what is the wisdom** that comes from fearing God?

What are the **blessings** and the **benefits** to fearing God?

Well there are **countless blessings** that come from our joy of fearing of God – but let me just **give you a few!**

Prolonged Life

First:

The fear of God [in the book of Proverbs] is said to *prolong our lives*

This is Proverbs 10:27 which says:

The fear of the Lord *prolongs life, but **the** years **of the** wicked will be cut short...*

Proverbs 14:27 says:

The fear of the Lord *is a fountain **of** life, that one may turn away from **the** snares **of** death...*

Obviously then **when you have** a healthy – happy – and holy fear of the LORD – Solomon says you're gonna **stay out** of a lot of trouble!

If you fear God then you're probably NOT **going to indulge in sinful/stupid/ and self-destructive** behaviour!

If you fear God – then you're **going to avoid** sinful, corrupt, and immoral behaviour & relationships!

It means that you're **going to avoid** sinful diseases that come through transmitted behaviour!

It means that if you fear God you are going to **obey the laws of the land** and **NOT** be subject to the death penalty or jail time!

You're gonna make wise decisions!

It means that **kids** that **if you go on** disobeying your parents – your life will **NOT** be as long in the land – **Exodus 20 verse 12!**

That's speaking of a **general life direction** that if kids don't learn to obey authority and laws at home – it's probably going to come out in the way they live in society...

Ephesians chapter 6 says:

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord...that it may go well with you and that you **may enjoy** long life on the earth...*

I mean try quoting that one to your 5-year-old sometime!

You wanna live in the land – you gotta obey mummy and Daddy and that's a biblical principle!

If you fear God you won't want to be **under the influence of alcohol** when it comes to driving a car!

It means that you're **probably** going to **take care of your body** and make better life choices!

And so the fear of the LORD means that your life will **be prolonged** because you value the opinion of God and His word **over and above** the opinions of men & their foolishness!

And you will be wise – and you will make wiser choices!

So the Fear of God **prolongs life!**

Kill Sin

Second:

The Fear of God empowers obedience!

It empowers our Christian obedience!

It causes us to kill our sin and walk in holiness!

Proverbs chapter 8:13 says:

To fear the LORD is to hate evil. Arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech I hate...

So the fear of the LORD is **in one sense synonymous** with hating evil!

That is to say that if you hate evil – **in the Proverbs** then you are **on the path** to fearing God!

Proverbs chapter 3 verse 7 says:

*Be not wise in your own eyes but **fear the LORD**, and turn away from evil...*

Notice the progression in Solomon's thinking:

Be **NOT** wise in your own eyes – which is to say ***don't be a fool!***

How do you **NOT** be a fool:

Fear God – turn away from evil!

One is the **root** – the **other** is the **fruit**!

One is the **cause** – the **other** is the **effect**!

To **fear** God is the **cause** – to **turn** is the **effect**!

These are **inseparably linked** in the book of Proverbs!

To fear God is to hate evil – to hate evil is to fear God!

And finally in Proverbs 16 verse 6 says:

By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil...

So according to **wisdom** – according to **Proverbs** – and according to **the bible**:

If you want to be holy!

If you want to be righteous!

If you want to resist the schemes of the Devil!

Then you must practice the power of the presence of God – fearing Him!

Coram Deo

I mean just think for a moment – **think back** on **your life** to some of the **most tragic** decisions you've ever made as a Christian!

Think of the most **foolish decisions** – and **sinful decisions** that were ever made by you?

Now in those moments of **foolish** behaviour and **sin**:

What do you think was lacking in that moment?

What do you think was missing in that time?

Do you **NOT** see that it always was a lack of the fear of God!

It was the lack of His awareness and presence!

And so the **truly wise person** in the bible and **specifically** in the **book of Proverbs** is the one who constantly lives *Coram Deo* which is:

Before the face of God!

In the presence of God!

Knowing that God is always present – always watching – always there **in our moments of sin** – watching every moment and warning us **NOT** heed to the voice of folly – but:

To turn away from evil and fear the LORD!

The fear of the LORD drives our Christian obedience!

Fear of Man

Third:

The fear of God conquers the fear of man

The fear of God makes us **bold disciples** for the Lord Jesus Christ!

This is **NOT** a fear like **other fears** that tend to **shrink** you and **shrivel** you and make you **small** and **impotent** – but this is a fear which **enlarges** you – and **empowers** you – and **enlightens** you because you are re-oriented into a proper place of who you are and who God is!

Proverbs 29:25 says:

The fear of man lays a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD is safe...

As with most of the Proverbs Solomon is making a contrast between the way of the **fool** – to the way of the **wise**:

The way of the fool **trusts in the opinions of man** and cares what man thinks – the way of the wise **puts his trust in God!**

The word for **snare** here in verse 25 literally means to *bait/ to lure/ or to catch!*

It basically refers to a trap **being set** in the act of hunting!

When you and I make our decisions **based upon** the fear & opinions of men – we are **literally being baited** into living for the glory of man!

What will man think?

What will man say?

How will he judge me!

And the **effectiveness** of the trap is seen in the **surprising nature** of the bait!

This trap catches us **by surprise!**

It catches us **off guard!**

It catches us when we **least expect it!**

The fear of man in other words:

Shows up in the **most surprising** of places!

It shows up in our parenting!

It shows up in our marriages!

It shows up in our churches!

And so Solomon says that **just as an animal** caught in a trap can't perform its God-given function – **when you and I** give way to the fear of man – we **can't do** what God is calling us to do as Christians!

When we have the **fear of man** deeply supplanted in the crevice of our hearts:

We **can't rebuke** a brother or sister in Christ!

We **can't perform** the discipline and instruction of our children!

We can't **effectively preach** the whole-counsel of God!

We can't do **any of those things** because we will be **so crippled** by the fear of man – that we lose sight of the fear of God!

And so Solomon says that **the antidote** to the **sin of** fearing man's opinion is:

Trusting in the Person of God!

*The fear of man lays a snare, but **he who trusts in the LORD** will find safety!*

The antidote **in other words** to the sin of fearing man is:

The joy of trusting God!

Fearing God!

Serving God rightly!

The fear of God displaces the fear of man and causes us to **rise above** the level of cowardice!

Galatians

This is what drove the Apostle Paul in Galatians 1 when preaching the gospel of Christ – he said:

*Am I now seeking the approval of man, or the approval of God?...for if I were **still trying to please man**, I would **NOT** be a servant of Christ...*

Paul says that when we try to live for the **glory of man** and the **opinions of man** – we no longer live as servants of Christ!

If we want to be effective agents in our preaching of the gospel – then we had better get a **proper grasp** on:

The Fear of God!

Acts

Acts 5:28 says that **after the authorities** of the city demand the Apostles **NOT** to **teach** or **preach** in the name of Christ:

Peter and the apostles stand up in the midst of these men and say: We must obey God rather than man...

These men were captivated by the fear and holiness of God!

The fear of God **emboldened** these **disciples** to preach and to teach in no other name!

This is what Paul says in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5:

Knowing the fear of God, we persuade others...

The fear of God **literally drives** the way we preach Christ!

It drives our evangelism!

It governs the way that we teach and preach the glories of Christ!

I love the way the **King James** puts it in 2nd Corinthians:

*Knowing, therefore, the **terror of the Lord**, we persuade men!*

Knowing the terror of God we persuade others to repent and believe!

All of life

You see the fear of God – **NOT only** emboldens our witness – it **NOT only** drives our evangelism – and kills our sin and prolongs our lives — but the fear of God **literally determines** our **very life direction!**

It **determines** what kind of people we're going to become!

The kind of kids we raise!

The kind of homes we foster!

The kind of mums we become!

The dads we reflect!

The fear of God **literally colours** everything we do as Christians!

And the reason is because if I know that **God is holy** – if I know that **God is pure** – and **righteous** – and **just** – **undefiled by sin**:

That's going to motivate the way the way that I live for Him!

It's going to motivate the way that I love my wife!

And parent my children!

And pastor this church!

How much time I spend watching T.V.

Scrolling on my phone!

Working for my employer!

Serving in the church!

It's going to change **how** you & I serve in in this world!

The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge!

It is the **foundation upon which** everything else in the Christian life is built!

Matthew 7

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7 about the one who built his house on the solid rock of Christ:

*The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it **did not fall**, because it was **founded upon the solid rock...***

And the Rock there in Matthew 7 is the word of God – it's the teaching of Christ – the wisdom of God revealed in Jesus!

And he compares **that man** to the **foolish man** also found in Matthew 7!

Fool

The fool in Matthew 7 **did NOT build** upon the Rock – he did NOT heed the words of Christ – but remember he built it upon:

The **shifting sands** of this world!

And as you know the fool **according to Proverbs** is the one who rejects the word of God – He rejects the counsel of men – he rejects the wisdom of God!

Proverbs 1:7:

The fool despises wisdom and instruction!

And so **the difference** between these two men – is that:

*The one **who was wise** heard the word of God **and obeyed!***

He heard the word of God and obeyed!

The difference was **obedience to wisdom!**

He **heard** the voice of wisdom – and he **obeyed** the voice of wisdom!

Butch McGregor

Let me finish here today with a story found in Jerry Bridges' wonderful book *The joy of Fearing God*...

Bridges explains the story of a young Marine Corporal by the name of Butch McGregor who during boot camp was facing a harsh inspection by a 2-star general (which is pretty high up in the marines)...and this general was known to strike fear and dread in the hearts of those marines who did not really know him personally!

And of course the general raked Butch over the coals with questioning and comments during the inspection...

Later

Well later in his time in the marines – Butch was **assigned to drive** this **steely eyed general** around as his chauffeur – and by watching him interact with other officers and those underneath him – butch acquired something of a fondness for the general that was mixed in with both **fear** and **respect**...

One day they were driving through a warzone when they hit a land mine and their vehicle was overturned – the general was thrown out of the vehicle – but butch got stuck under the car and so the general came back and at **great risk to his own life**, he rescued Sargent McGregor and Saved Butch's life!

Well butch ended up in hospital for **several weeks on end** and everyday he said that the general came to visit him and talk with him...

And after a time butch said that his eyes were opened **to the love** and the **affection** of the general – he came to realise that the general **loved him** and had great affection for him... and butch found himself loving the general back...

And so after his time in hospital he went back to driving the general around with **new found regard** for him...

He still called him yes sir and no sir – he still had 2 stars on his shoulder - but now he knew the general in a new and profound way!

The relationship between these men had changed!

The terror had been transformed into a deep love and affection because of the general's grace!

Gospel

Brothers and sisters,

That's how it is with us!

Before we came to know this great and terrifying God – we were fearful and in dread of his judgements – but as we come to know Him – and revere Him – and stand before Him **in Christ!**

Our relationship goes from one of dread to deep love and affection for this great God and King!

Conclusion

And so it is in the book of **Proverbs** – it is this **concept** – it is this **saying** through which **every other proverb** finds its origin – it's source – it's meaning – and significance!

The question is:

Do we wanna be wise?

Do we want to be holy?

Do we want to have knowledge?

Do we want to rise above the confusion and mess of today's modern climate!

Do we want freedom over sin?

Victory over death!

And prosperous, happy, and prolonged life?!?!?

Then we must study to **show ourselves approved** in the fear & knowledge of the LORD!

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom – and fools despise wisdom and knowledge:

But the wise **will learn to fear** the LORD!

Proverbs 1:7

Discussion Questions

[Read Proverbs 1:1-7; 9:10].

Main Point: *The fear of the LORD is the sum and substance of the entire Christian life.*

Q1. How would you define “*The Fear of the LORD?*” according to Scripture? – Look at passages like **Genesis 15:1; Genesis 28:17; Exodus 3:6; Exodus 20:18–19; Judges 6:22–23; Daniel 10:7–9; Luke 1:12–13; Luke 1:29–30; Matthew 17:5–7; Revelation 1:17.** – Do any of these help in defining the fear of God? [See also **Psalm 33:8-9; 34:7; 86:11; 111:10; 128:1; Isaiah 33:6; Luke 1:50; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Colossians 3:22; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5; Hebrews 10:31; 12:29**]. Do you think this is a major theological topic? Why or why not?

Q2. Read Psalm 2:1-12. How does the Psalm command us to both fear the LORD and rejoice in the LORD? – What is it about God that causes our hearts to tremble in Psalm 2? – How would you explain the difference between *servile fear* [slavish fear] and *filial fear* [family fear]? – Why does this distinction matter?

Q3. Do you agree that the fear of God has fallen out of favour in modern evangelical circles? Why do you think this is? – What are some other “hard topics” of the bible that Christians avoid? – Why is this? – What is the antidote to our anaemic view of God?

Q4. [Read Proverbs 1:7; 9:10]. Why does Solomon call the fear of the LORD “*the beginning*” of knowledge and wisdom? – How does the fear of God guide our lives as Christians?

Q5. According to Proverbs 10:27 and 14:27, what are some practical life blessings that come from fearing the LORD? – How does fearing God help us kill sin, according to Proverbs 8:13 and 16:6? – **[Read Proverbs 29:25]**. How does the fear of God displace the fear of man? – Can you think of an example where fearing God made someone bold?

Q6. How does the gospel change our fear of God from dread to delight? – In what areas of your life do you struggle to live “*Coram Deo*” – before the face of God? – What would change in your life if you truly feared God more than man? Be specific. – What spiritual habits might help you cultivate a healthy fear of the LORD?