The Fear of the Lord, His Secrets, and the Banner

Ministry · July 7, 2024

What the Fear of the Lord Actually Is

Three passages from Proverbs and one from Job open this subject. Proverbs 8:13 — the fear of Jehovah is to hate evil. Proverbs 16:6 — by the fear of Jehovah men depart from evil. Proverbs 23:17 — be thou in the fear of Jehovah all the day. And Job 28:28 — the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; to depart from evil is understanding.

The fear of the Lord is not the fear of man. The fear of man brings a snare — it is an anxiety about what men might do to us, and it causes us to compromise and conceal and capitulate. The fear of the Lord is entirely different. There is nowhere in Scripture where we are told to be afraid of God in that paralysing, cringing sense. What is described here is a reverential awe — a constant consciousness of being in His presence, behaving at all times as though He is right there, because He is.

Think of what a classroom is like when the teacher steps out. Chaos. The natural heart, without restraint, without a sense of being seen and accountable, acts according to its own will. When the teacher returns, order is restored by presence alone. The fear of the Lord is that constant inward sense: He is here. I am in His presence. My thoughts, my words, my use of time, my conduct in public and in private — all of it is before Him. And that sense shapes everything.

> *The fear of Jehovah is to hate evil. Pride and arrogancy and the evil way and the froward mouth do I hate. — Proverbs 8:13*

The opposite of the fear of the Lord — foolishness — is defined in Scripture not as stupidity but as the practical denial that God exists: the fool has said in his heart, no God. Satan's great work against the soul is distraction from the consciousness of God. He does not need to convince anyone to disbelieve intellectually. He only needs to fill the mind with enough other things that God is not thought of, not considered, not present in the practical consciousness. That is the fool's condition, and we are susceptible to sliding into it even as believers.

The Secret of the Lord Is With Them That Fear Him

Psalm 25:14 adds a consequence to the fear of the Lord that is remarkable: the secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him, that He may make known His covenant to them. The word secret here does not mean a hidden mystery that no one can access. It refers to intimate communication — the Lord sharing His mind and purposes with those who walk close to Him.

The contrast between Abraham and Lot illustrates this with precision. Both were righteous men — the New Testament tells us that plainly. But when the Lord was about to destroy Sodom, He told Abraham. He came to him and said, shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing? And Abraham was then given the extraordinary privilege of interceding for any righteous who might be in that city. Lot, by contrast, received no such communication. Angels were sent to snatch him out before the destruction fell. He had no warning, no participation in God's purposes, no intimacy of counsel.

Why? Abraham conducted his life in the fear of the Lord. We see it clearly in Genesis 22 — when God told him to offer Isaac, he rose up early in the morning. He did not delay, he did not negotiate, he did not wait for a more convenient time. He walked in reverential obedience. And the secret of the Lord was with him. Lot, though righteous, had chosen his path by what he could see — the well-watered plain of Jordan. His eye was on the earth, not on the Lord. The

secret of the Lord was not communicated to him.

The Shepherds and Anna — To Whom the Secrets Were Given

Luke 2 gives a remarkable illustration of the same principle. When the Lord Jesus was born, who received the announcement? Not the scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem. Not Gamaliel, the revered teacher of Judaism. Not the temple authorities. Shepherds. Random shepherds in a field outside Bethlehem, watching their flocks through the night.

What do we know about these shepherds? The Lord trusted them with His secret. And the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. So we know something about these shepherds: they feared the Lord. They were like David before them — men with a shepherd's heart, living with their animals in the dark, watching over what had been entrusted to them. And to them the angel came: fear not, for behold I announce to you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people — for today a Saviour has been born to you in David's city, who is Christ the Lord.

Anna the prophetess in the same chapter is the other example. A widow from her twenties, she served in the temple with fastings and prayers night and day — for more than fifty years. She did not depart from the temple. She was entirely given to the Lord. And when the infant Jesus was brought to the temple, she gave praise to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those who waited for redemption in Jerusalem. Psalm 60:4 says: Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. The banner was given to Anna — a widow woman, a nobody in the world's eyes — because she walked in the fear of the Lord all her days.

> *The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear him, that he may make known his covenant to them. — Psalm 25:14*

We are not to pursue the fear of the Lord because we want a banner. We are not to want the banner at all — that is the Corinthian error, desiring the showy gifts, wanting to be seen out front. We want to be in the fear of the Lord because that is what the Lord desires for us. And then He may be pleased to share something of His mind with us — to give us a word of encouragement for those around us, or a glimpse of what He is doing. That comes as His gift, not our achievement.

The Spirit Maintains the Vital Link

Romans 8 tells us that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The Spirit also helps our infirmities — we do not even know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. He searches the hearts and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. John 16:13 gives the Lord's own word on this: when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth — He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak.

First Corinthians 12 speaks of the one body being formed by one Spirit: by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body. The Spirit is the vital link — uniting every believer to the head in heaven, maintaining the consciousness of that union in the individual soul, and producing the corporate character of the body on earth. What maintains the fear of the Lord in my heart day by day is not my own effort of remembrance. It is the indwelling Spirit, who is always present, always active, always drawing the soul toward the Lord.

The Lord said it is expedient that He go away so that the Spirit might come. The Spirit is not an inferior substitute. He was sent specifically, precisely for us, to maintain what the Lord desired — that we walk in the consciousness of His presence, in the fear of the Lord all the day, with that vital link to Him in the heavenlies unbroken. How much consciousness do I have of that in my daily walk? The more I have, no doubt, the more the secret of the Lord will be with

me.

The Chiefest Among Ten Thousand — Lifted Up as a Banner

Song of Songs 5:10 contains a detail that ties all of this together. The bride, describing her beloved to the daughters of Jerusalem, calls him the chiefest among ten thousand. The word chiefest, in the original, means lifted up as a banner. He is the one who is raised up, displayed, held high above all — not by her effort, but as the one who is simply who He is.

Earlier in the book she had said I am black. She was a nobody. She had been scorched by the sun and was not, in her own eyes, lovely. But He had loved her and taken her as His own. And from that place she could speak of Him as the one lifted up as a banner. This is what the fear of the Lord produces — not self-promotion, not a desire to be the banner-carrier, but an occupation with Him that eventually makes us able to speak of Him to others with reality and conviction.

The shepherds, Anna, Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, the lowly ones throughout Scripture who walked in the fear of the Lord — these are the ones to whom the Lord gave His secrets, and through whom He displayed His banner. May He give us grace to walk in the consciousness of His presence, that the secret of the Lord might be with us, and that He — not we — might be lifted up as a banner in the truth.

> *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world that he may put to shame the wise... that no flesh should boast before God. — 1 Corinthians 1:27, 29*

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