

Having finished John chapter 5 last week, I thought we would take a short break for 4-6 weeks, and consider a topical series on the subject of Christian or Gospel Fear—that is—that fear of God that Christians should have and that results from the gospel...

Now—I think most of us would agree that the topic of fearing God has fallen on hard times—it's either neglected or terribly confused—and yet, the Scriptures speak of it as essential to true religion, Old and New Testament, and something of great practical relevance...

Thus—I intend to give the first few sermons over to defending, defining, and describing Gospel Fear, and then we'll be able to spend the last few sermons showing how highly practical and necessary, Gospel or Christian Fear is...

Now—before I come to our subject, let me begin with a few introductory thoughts concerning our text—[1] the passage describes a historical return of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem, v37—"Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely"—this actually happened under Ezra and Nehemiah—thus there are NO OT promises yet unfilled with regards to national Israel returning to the land of Canaan or Palestine...

[2] The passage describes a future return of elect sinners to God, through the merits of a new and better covenant—that is—the historical return from Babylon to the land of Promise—shadowed the future return of sinners, through Christ, to the favor and blessing of God, which will ultimately be realized in the New Heavens and Earth—thus, Jer.31:28-34, contains an identical prophecy that's quoted and applied to the church in the NT (Heb.8:8-12)—land (v28), new covenant (v31), new heart (vv33)...

Now—the point of this first message—is to show you The Blessedness of Fearing God—simply put—it's a very good thing that all Christians have, must maintain, and increase—Fearing God, as I'll define more fully it next week—is a blessed reality...

- I. Some Reasons for this Blessedness
- II. Some Responses to this Blessedness

I. Some Reasons for this Blessedness [first 6 are generally found in Jer.32:38-41]

A. It comes from God

1. Now—before I suggest these 7 reasons—I think it's necessary to provide a short and very simple definition...
2. As I mentioned—I hope to return next week—and spend the entire sermon provided an extended definition...
3. But—let me simply use Professor Murray's definition, that will at least remove from your minds any misconceptions...
4. John Murray—"The fear of God is essentially a religious concept; (1) it refers to the conception we entertain of God and (2) the attitude of heart and mind that is ours by reason of that conception..."
5. Notice—professor Murray's definition has two parts—[a] the conception we have of God, [b] the attitude of heart and mind that results...
6. In other words—the fear of God entails a proper knowledge of God, that impacts and regulates our behavior...
7. Thus—simply put—fearing God is having a right understanding of God that impacts and regulates the way we feel TOWARD God and live BEFORE God...
8. As a result—to live in the fear of God—is to ever live with this knowledge of God brought to bear upon every area of life...

9. Thus—fearing God is the soul's response to the knowledge of who God is in the sum total of His divine perfections...
10. It's seeing God as holy, just, righteous, loving, merciful, gracious, and good—it's having all that brought to bare upon our souls and lives...
11. It's for this reason the fear of God is often connected with a diversity of other graces—love, delight, trust, awe, repentance, and sorrow for sin...
12. Because, depending upon how God is perceived at that moment—it gives way to various proper responses...
13. This brings me to the first reason behind the blessedness of Gospel Fear—it comes from God—it is a gift given to His people...
14. [1] He sovereignly gives it, v40—"I will not turn way from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts..."
15. The phrase "My fear" means it originates from Him and it focuses upon Him—it is fear from God and the fear of God...
16. Notice where He puts this fear—"I will put My fear in their hearts"—only God can put this fear in our hearts...
17. And He does this sovereignly and powerfully—"I will"—not—I may, or I'll try—but I WILL put My fear in them...
18. Thus—God doesn't give this fear to every person—it is a gift, a blessing, given only to His beloved elect people...
19. Ex.33:19—"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whoever I will have compassion..."
20. Perhaps I can put it like this—Christian or Gospel Fear is a blessed thing because it's a rare thing—found only in true Christians...
21. [2] He gladly gives it, v41—"Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul..."
22. In other words—it's not a work that He reluctantly does—but He gives it joyfully and with His whole heart...
23. [3] He graciously gives it—by this I mean—God gives this fear to those who've done nothing to deserve it...
24. V30—"because the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done only evil before Me from their youth. For the children of Israel have provoked Me only to anger with the work of their hands, says the LORD..."
25. This is first a description of the nation of Israel, and thus the reason they were exiled away from God to Babylon...
26. But—my dear friends—it is also a description of all men by nature, as they are exiled away from God in this world...
27. It is in this condition that God finds us all—when He sovereignly and gladly—puts His fear into our hearts...

B. It comes as a covenant blessing

1. V40—"And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good: but I will put My fear in their hearts..."
2. Now—here I want to suggest three things about this covenant—as it has bearing upon the blessedness of Gospel Fear...
3. [1] It is an effectual covenant—by this I mean—it is covenant wherein every covenant member possess this fear...
4. This of course is unlike the OC, which had members that feared God and it had other members that didn't fear God...
5. V38—"They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me..."
6. Every covenant member gets a new heart that fears God—this is a universal and generic covenant blessing...

7. [2] It is an eternal covenant—that is—it has its origination in eternity past—and—it continues to eternity future...
8. This covenant has its beginning in the eternal councils of God—wherein the Father and Son covenanted together...
9. The Father promised to give the Son a Bride—a people, taken from every tribe, nation, kindred, and tongue...
10. The Son promised to assume our nature, live and die as our surety—and pay the sin debt of His beloved people...
11. The Father promised to provide a body for the Son, sustain Him throughout His life, and exalt Him above every name...
12. Thus—this eternal covenant, was shadowed throughout the OC, and it was fully realized in the New Covenant...
13. Thus—the everlasting covenant mentioned in Jer.32:40 is the same as the New Covenant mentioned in Jer.31:31-34...
14. V38—"They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me FOREVER..."
15. V41—"Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul..."
16. Matt.15:12-13—"Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying? But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted..."
17. [3] It is a costly covenant—that is—the promises within it, were purchased and secured at a very high price...
18. That price of course being—the blood of Christ—the blood of the NC—the blood that secures Gospel Fear...
19. Heb.13:20-21—"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen..."
20. Now—if Gospel Fear is the result of the everlasting (or NC)—and the everlasting covenant is secured with Christ's blood—then Gospel Fear is very costly...
21. Perhaps I can put it this way—Christ died so that He would have a people who love Him, obey Him, and fear Him...

C. It unifies the church

1. V38—"They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them..."
2. By this I mean—the Lord will give every covenant member a new heart that fears Him—and unifies them...
3. [1] One heart—"I will give them one heart"—that is—one unified heart that together—loves and fears God...
4. Every Christian has a new heart that now fears God—this means—we all fundamentally think similarly of God...
5. Now—the fact that He gives us all "one heart" doesn't mean He makes us into clones, who think identically on every subject..
6. NO—but it does mean—He gives every covenant member a new heart, which is a heart that now fears God...
7. [2] One way—"I will give them one way"—that is—one way of living that results from one heart that fears God...
8. Why do all Christians live the way they do—why they hate the things they hate, and love the things they love...
9. The reason is because—they all, without exception, have hearts that fear God, and thus live in a similar way...

10. This is what unifies the church—yes, they all love God—yes, they all obey God—but also, they all fear God...
11. Acts 9:31—"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied..."
12. To "walk in the fear of the Lord" means, at least in part—to live constantly within the realm of fearing God...
13. It's as if the fear of God is the atmosphere within which we live and spiritually breathe—we are to keep ourselves in the fear of God...
14. Now—remember the simple definition I've provided—to walk in the fear of God is to walk conscious of God's excellency...

D. It brings good to the soul

1. V39—"then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them..."
2. To fear God is a good thing—it brings with it many blessings and benefits—it carries with it all forms of good...
3. John Gill said—"There is scarce any one character by which the people of God are described, under which more promises or good things are made unto them, than this..."
4. [1] Protection, Ps.34:7—"The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear him, and delivers them..."
5. [2] Provision, Ps.33:19—"Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You..."
6. The "goodness" refers to includes all that's associated with our salvation—foremost, spiritual grace and blessings...
7. [3] Intimacy, Ps.25:14—"The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant..."

E. It keeps us close to God

1. V40b—"I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me"—this fear keeps us close to God...
2. [1] It drives us from sin—throughout Scripture—we find fearing God and leaving (forsaking) sin coupled together...
3. Prov.8:13—"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate..."
4. Prov.16:6—"In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil..."
5. [2] It brings us to God—the fear of God not only drives us from God—but it brings us, it compels us, to God...
6. Here—I have to remind you that there's a kind of fear that drives us from God—that pushes us away from Him...
7. But—the fear that's put in our heart in conversion—that has been purchased by blood—it drives us to God...
8. Gen.3:9-10—"Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you? So he said, I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself..."
9. Heb.12:28-29—"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire..."

F. It represents true piety

1. If you notice—this FEAR is the only grace promised in this passage—it's as if gospel fear is the whole of true and inward religion...

2. John Murray—"The fear of God is the soul of godliness. The emphasis of Scripture in both the Old Testament and the New requires no less significant a proposition..."
3. John Gill—"A godly fear has the goodness of God for its object, springs from a sense of the love of God, is a reverential affection for him, and is attended with faith and spiritual joy, and includes all worship of him, both internal and external..."
4. [1] Prov.1:7—"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction..."
5. The fear of the Lord is the principle part, the chief part, of true, religious, and saving knowledge of all things...
6. [2] Ecc.12:13—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all..."
7. Solomon is here reflecting upon a long life of many experiences—he sought satisfaction in many different things...
8. But—at the very end of the whole thing, he comes to this final and summary conclusion—this is what matters...
9. [3] Matt.10:27-28—"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell..."
10. Now—as we shall see in coming weeks—our Savior is NOT exhorting us to fear whether or not we shall be thrown into hell...
11. We are to fear that we may be thrown into hell—but we are to fear the ONE who has authority to cast into hell...
12. We are to fear God—as the God who has right to cast into hell, and who will exercise that right at the final day...
13. [4] Phil.2:12—"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 (2Cor.7:1; 1Pet.1:17)..."
14. Here—the fear of the Lord is describes as the atmosphere within which we, work out (not for) our salvation...
15. [5] Rev.14:6-7—"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people – saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water..."
16. V6 describes the preaching of the everlasting gospel—v7 describes what happens when that gospel is believed...

G. It renders us like Christ

1. By this I mean—gospel or Christian fear was perfectly and fully within the human soul of our beloved Savior...
2. Never was there a man who feared God more than Him—just as with every other grace—it was given to Him without measure...
3. Thus—it's for this reason, all Christians fear God, as we are being conformed into the moral image of Christ...
4. Isa.11:1-3—"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness..."
5. [a] The Spirit rests upon Him as the Spirit of the fear of the Lord—that is—the Spirit communicated to Him the fear of God...
6. [b] His delight is in the fear of the LORD—that is—He delighted in all that the fear of God means and entails...
7. Thus—we learn, that fearing God renders us like Christ—it enables us to bear the moral image of our Savior (Job 1:1)...

8. Remember—the Same Spirit that was given to Christ without measure, is given to every Christian in measure...
9. Heb.5:7—"who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement (fervent) cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear..."
10. This text seems to describe our Savior that night in the garden—when His sweat became like droops of blood (Lk.22:44)...
11. Notice—the Father heard His cries, which no doubt included, cries that the Father would raise Him from the dead...
12. But—the question here I have is this—WHY did the Father hear the fervent cries and prays of His beloved Son...
13. V7—"He was heard because of His GODLY FEAR"—because He feared His Father—because He knew God...

II. Some Responses to this Blessedness

1. [1] Let us examine ourselves, to be sure that we fear God—although we haven't defined this fear yet, in any real degree—I think we've seen enough of it to know what it is...
2. My friends—remember—this fear is not a side-issue—it's not a secondary, take of leave it truth—gospel fear is a direct result of believing the gospel...
3. No person who lacks the fear of God, has no solid foundation to assert that they are covenant members and true Christians...
4. Pastor Albert Martin—"To be void of the FEAR of God, is to be void of true and saving Biblical religion..."
5. [2] Let us give thanks to God, to the extent that we fear God—remember, Gospel Fear is the gracious gift of God...
6. There's a sense in which it's a very rare beauty—and wherein it's found—it's the result of God's gracious gift...
7. Prov.31:30—"Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised..."
8. Fear God renders a woman truly and lastingly beautiful—and so it renders every soul that possesses this grace...