

We come this morning to our sixth sermon in a short topical series entitled Gospel Fear—for the past several sermons we have been considering Its Descriptions—that is, throughout Scripture we find God-fearers acting in certain ways—thus far we've seen Gospel Fear Trembling before the Just Judgments of God, Bowing before the Holy Word of God, and Standing in Awe before the Mighty Works of God...

That brings us this week to, Walking Carefully before the Holy Eyes of God—in other words, Christian or Gospel Fear has a profound impact or influence upon the whole of life—everything that we say, think, and do...

It's a chronic mindset that never goes away—wherever we go, whatever we do, we are ever conscious of God's all-seeing eyes—perhaps we could liken Gospel Fear to salt, having salted our meal, every mouthful has now been altered by his flavor...

Thomas Boston—"This fear should season all we do, and be with us in all times, cases, conditions, places, and companies..."

Thus—Christians live in the fear of the Lord always, walk in the fear of the Lord, and work out their salvation in the realm of fear and trembling—simply put—Christians are to ever live, with the knowledge of God's eyes upon them—they are to walk careful before the eyes of God...

- I. The Doctrine Stated
- II. The Doctrine Explained
- III. The Doctrine Expanded
- IV. The Doctrine Applied

#### I. The Doctrine Stated

(1) Gospel Fear is evidenced in a careful walking (2) before the eyes of God, (3) above all else desiring His smile (4) and dreading His frown

#### II. The Doctrine Explained

1. Here I want to briefly explain the four parts to this proposition or doctrine—careful walking, before the eyes of God, desiring His smile, dreading His frown...
2. [1] Careful walking—by this I mean—cautious or watchful living—mindful of our weakness and the presence of our enemies...
3. Think for example of our troops in Iraq or Afghanistan—ever mindful of hidden bombs and enemy snipers...
4. I suggest that when they walk through various little towns—they do so carefully and with a wholesome fear...
5. 1Pet.1:17—"conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear"—that is—HERE in enemy territory...
6. Thus—native to Gospel Fear is a caution and circumspection—a holy suspicion of our own strength and ability...
7. Thomas Boston—"When a man is much afraid of snares in his way he takes good heed where and how he walks..."
8. Christians are constantly exhorted "to watch," "be alert," "be sober"—these are other ways of saying "be careful..."
9. To walk through this word with light feet—cautious and careful—knowing the ever presence of our enemies...
10. [2] Before the eyes of God—that is—a God-fearer ever lives conscious of God's all-present and all-seeing eyes...

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" is to live everyday—conscious of the fact God is everywhere present...
13. Remember how we've defined the fear of God—the soul's comprehension of the whole character of God...
14. Thus—walking or living in the fear of God, is living knowing God's loving, holy, and gracious eyes are watching...
15. It's walking or living beneath the whole of God's perfections—it's living in the very presence of God...
16. The Latin phrase is Coram Deo—Before the Presence of God—living with God's eyes always on us...
17. [3] Desiring His smile—here I need to clarify—that by smile I do not refer to a judicial standing or acceptance...
18. There is nothing any sinner can do to gain God's judicial smile or approval—this is the result of Christ's merit...
19. But—the smile I here refer to is a Fatherly Smile or approval—which brings good to us, and glory to God...
20. Col.1:9-10—"For this reason we do not cease to pray for you...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him..."
21. This is what I mean, at least in part, by God's smile—pleasing Him walking worthy of the Lord and our calling...
22. Again—our obedience can never "please Him" so as to earn our acceptance—but our obedience pleases Him as the loving obedience of a son pleases his father...
23. Those who fear God—long to please God in this sense—they above all else walk desirous of His loving smile...
24. [4] Dreading His frown—again by this phrase, I do not refer to a judicial frown, but to God's Fatherly displeasure...
25. If walking "worthy of the Lord" fully pleases Him—then "walking in an unworthy fashion," displeases Him...
26. Thus—walking in the fear of the Lord presupposes that we are concerned, as Christians, what our Father thinks...
27. Now—and this is very important—we must remember that God is our Father, and yet, remains to be our God...
28. In the words of our Savior—He is—"our Father who art in heaven"—He's our Father and He's our LORD...
29. Thus—walking in the fear of the LORD knows God as a loving and holy Father, and yet, our heavenly Father...
30. Accordingly—Gospel Fear—walks carefully before the eyes of God—above all else desiring to please Him and dreading to displease Him...
31. John Flavel—"Christian Fear is a gracious habit or principle planted by God in the soul, whereby the soul is kept under an holy awe of the eye of God, and from thence is inclined to perform and do what pleases him, and to shun and avoid whatsoever he forbids and hates..."
32. John Brown—"Christian Fear is an awful sense of His infinite grandeur and excellence, corresponding to the revelation He has made of these in His work and word, inducing a conviction that His favor is the greatest of all blessings, and His disapproval the greatest of all evils, and manifesting itself in leading us practically to seek His favor as the chief good we can enjoy, and avoid His disapproval as the most tremendous evil we can be subjected to..."

### III. The Doctrine Expanded

Here I want to suggest three reasons WHY those who fear God—walk carefully before Him, desiring His smile and dreading His frown...

A. To honor His law and name

1. That is—Christians walk carefully before God—because they long to honor and not dishonor the Family name...
2. For example, think of a son of an important political leader—let's say a king of a glorious and vast kingdom...
3. Everywhere the son (prince) goes, the eyes of the entire kingdom are on him—scrutinizing his every move...
4. There is a sense in which the honor of his father is intimately tied to his behavior—for he is his father's son...
5. Well—the same is true of us—but to better describe our case, let's say, the prince was adopted by the king...
6. Let's say that by nature, the young boy was a poor orphan boy, filthy and hungry, living as a beggar on the streets...
7. Thus—by nature the boy was no better than the rest of the orphans within the kingdom—only the king made him to differ...
8. Now—I suggest that these realities (what he was by nature and had become by grace) would motivate him...
9. How can he live lawlessly and dishonor his beloved father—who graciously made him to differ from others...
10. Thus—Christians walk carefully, desiring God's smile and dreading His frown, because they know that only grace has made them to differ...
11. Perhaps—a Biblical example would help—think of Joseph, a man exalted by God's free grace in Potiphar's house...
12. Gen.39:9—"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he (Potiphar) kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God..."
13. In other words—Joseph had a fear and dread of sinning, in light of who God is and what He has done for him...
14. My friends—think of it this way—we are all Josephs who by nature are but dirty and filthy slaves—exalted in God's house...
15. And how can we act in any other way, other than in fear of dishonoring Him, by sinning against His holy law...

B. To avoid His Fatherly discipline

1. Christians walk carefully before God because they fear or dread His rod—they fear His loving, yet just, discipline...
2. Now—this is seen throughout the book of Proverbs, where fearing God is coupled with hating and turning from sin...
3. Why does the God-fearer hate and forsake sin, but because, at least in part, they fear His Fatherly discipline...
4. Prov.8:13—"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil"—that is—the fear of the LORD always results in hating evil...
5. Prov.16:6—"By the fear of the LORD one departs from evil"—we depart from evil because we fear the LORD...
6. Let me put it as simple as I can—Christians walk carefully before God because they fear His Fatherly rod...
7. Thus—Fatherly discipline or chastisement—while it's always loving and corrective, it at times can be very severe...
8. Now—the manifestations of this Fatherly discipline various—physical sickness, a guilty conscience, and even death...

9. Deut.8:5-6—"You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him..."
10. God is about to bring His people into the land of promise—before doing so, he tells them WHAT to do and WHY...
11. [a] WHAT they are to do, v6—"Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him..."
12. [b] WHY they are to do it, v5—"You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you..."
13. 1Pet.1:17—"And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear..."
14. [a] WHAY they are to do—"conduct yourself throughout the time of your stay here in fear"—in fear of God...
15. [b] WHY they are to do it—"If you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work..."
16. God will judge all men at the last day—and He will do so as an impartial, all-seeing, and all-knowing Judge...
17. Thus—in light of the Fact that He knows everything, and as a Father will hold us accountable—let us fear...
18. John Calvin—"The *fear* that is mentioned, stands opposed to heedless security, such as is wont to creep in, when there is a hope of deceiving with exemption. For, as God's eyes are such that they penetrate into the hidden recesses of the heart, we ought to walk with him carefully and not neglectfully..."
19. Now—I think this can be illustrated in most Christian homes—young children should fear their father's displeasure...
20. Let me ask you younger children a question—to you fear your father's displeasure as realized in loving discipline...
21. Of course, you do—and you should—but, and this is important, this dread is always mixed with a love for His person...
22. Again, think of the younger (or older) child—they are careful to obey for fear of discipline but also because of love...
23. Thus—Christian Fear walks careful before the eyes of God, for fear of His discipline, with two clarifications...
24. [1] It's never divorced from a love for our Father—dreading His rod and loving His person are not enemies...
25. These two go together—they strengthen each other—I dread His frown, because, I desire His Fatherly smile...
26. [2] It stems from a fear of sin as much as discipline—that is, it ultimately fears SIN because of what SIN is...
27. That is—Christians hate sin, not merely because of its consequences, but because of its fundamental nature...
28. Thomas Watson—"A wicked man may mourn for the bitter fruit of sin—but only a child of God can grieve for its odious nature..."

#### C. To enjoy His Fatherly love and embrace

1. This is another reason why Christians walk carefully before God—because they long for intimate fellowship...
2. That is—Christians are jealous to maintain a close relationship with their Father—that could be easily lost...
3. Now—again I need to clarify—there is nothing that we can do—to make God love us any more than He does...
4. His love is eternal, unmerited, and unchanging—because we did nothing to have—we can do nothing to lose it...

5. But—here I'm talking about our knowledge of God's love for us—this increases and decreases for various reasons...
6. And—perhaps, one of the most common and obvious reasons would be—failure to walk carefully before God...
7. This is something that all Christians fear—they fear sinning away the gracious and loving embrace of their Father...
8. Ps.51:11—"Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me (Ps.25:14)..."
9. Now—here I want you to notice—"Your presence" and "Your Holy Spirit" are synonymous—they're the same thing...
10. In other words—David was desirous that God would not take His presence from Him, by removing the Spirit...
11. Now—there are some who wrongly understand this to mean—that David was afraid of being rejected and lost...
12. Others, have also wrongly believed—that OT saints never had the Spirit indwelling them, and that He came and left...
13. Both of these are wrong—what David is referring to is—the lessening of God's gracious and intimate presence...
14. That is—what David was fearful of losing was—the sense of God's loving and gracious fellowship or embrace...
15. This—Christians can and do lose—"restore to me the joy of Your salvation"—not salvation, but joy of salvation...
16. Now—let me ask you a question—what was it that caused this disruption between David and His heavenly Father...
17. Well—if we took the time to read the Psalm, it's obvious—SIN—undealt with sin hinders intimacy between us and God...
18. This can be illustrated in our relationship with our spouses—if I ignored and/or spoke rude to my wife, there will be a temporary disruption of intimacy...
19. I don't expect that she will leave me, and cease being my wife, nor will she cease loving me—these never change...
20. And yet—I can hardly expect the degree of intimacy between me and my wife, will remain exactly the same...
21. Jn.14:21—"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him..."
22. I fear many Christians fail to understand these words—there is a necessary connection between obedience and intimacy...
23. Now—first, let me clarify what this verses doesn't mean—it does NOT mean He loves us because we love Him...
24. 1Jn.4:19—"We love Him because He first loved us"—His love ensures our love—it's the cause and ours the effect...
25. But—what it is saying is this—those who show their love by obedience, will come to know His love more intimately...
26. John Gill—"Christ does not begin to love his people when they begin to love, and obey him; their love and obedience to him, spring from his love to them; which love of his towards them was from everlasting: but this phrase signs a clearer discovery of his love to them, which passeth knowledge..."
27. Matthew Henry—"We could not love God if he did not first...give us his grace to love him; but there is a love of complacency promised to those that do love God. He loves them, and lets them know that he loves them, smiles upon them, and embraces them..."
28. John Calvin—"Christ's meaning was, I will grant to those who purely observe my doctrine, that they shall make progress from day to day in faith; that is, I will cause them to approach more nearly and more intimately to me..."

#### IV. The Doctrine Applied—two helps to walk carefully before God

A. Maintain a careful watch over yourself

1. Here—I want to briefly suggest three things in particular—that Christians need to take heed of regarding themselves...
2. [1] Keep watch over your HEAD—that is—be sure you are mindful of two things—your weakness and your enemies...
3. I am really convinced, there are two common errors most Christians make—they fail to know their weakness and danger...
4. That is—they forget how weak they are in themselves, and how pervasive and powerful their enemies are...
5. I fear many Christians, simply wake up and go off into the world every morning with little if any thought of these things...
6. This is what we need to do—find time alone with God, wherein we can renew our thinking about these things...
7. Let me ask you this question—when you step out of bed in the morning, do you view the world as a battlefield...
8. Eph.6:13—"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand..."
9. [2] Keep watch over your HEART, Prov.4:23—"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life..."
10. Simply put—no one can walk carefully before God, unless their heart is right with God and in healthy state...
11. And this is where things become even more dangerous—for our greatest enemy isn't without but within us...
12. Thomas Boston—"We always have the enemy within our walls. *A heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.* Now can men sleep securely when assassins are within their house? Constant danger requires constant fear and watchfulness. While a body of sin remains with us, temptations will always be presenting themselves..."
13. [3] Keep watch over your HANDS—by this I mean—watch those things you find yourself ordinarily doing...
14. A soldier who finds himself behind enemy lines, would be very cautious what he does and where he goes...

B. Remember God's eyes are in every place

1. Prov.15:3—"The eyes of the LORD *are* IN EVERY PLACE, keeping watch on the EVIL and the GOOD..."
2. I suggest, to be more specific, that we must especially remember that God's eyes are both holy and loving...
3. [1] He's in our HEART—we must be always mindful, that every thought we have, is before the holy and loving eyes of God...
4. [2] He's in our HOME—we must ever be mindful, that every conversation we have, is before God's holy and loving eyes...
5. [3] He's in our WORK—that is—we must act at the job or in the school, mindful of God's holy and loving eyes...
6. Col.3:22—"Slaves, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God..."
7. [4] He's in our WORSHIP—that is—in all our worship we must remain mindful of God's holy and loving eyes...
8. Ps.89:7—"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him..."