

Intro:

A quick review of last week:

1. Understanding the fear of the Lord
 - a. The starting point of wisdom (where it commences)
 - b. The ending point of wisdom (what is required to have wisdom, prerequisite)
2. Benefits of fearing the Lord: morality, security, longevity, growth, etc.

To sum it up, the concept of the fear of the Lord is a comprehensive approach to living out one's life before God.

This week we will begin by discussing a chart describing the Fear of the Lord as a spectrum of our growth in knowing God. It is expressed in a diagram from Ed Welch's book, *When People are Big and God is Small*, p. 97.

I. Growth in the fear of the Lord

One problem in understanding the fear of the Lord is that we see it as a 'static' thing: unchanging, a certain attitude we must adopt.

- The 'fear of the Lord' describes a relationship
- Like any relationship, it has peaks and valleys and *growth*

A. The terror factor (Psalm 34)

1. The fear of the Lord a big theme of this psalm (7, 9, 11)
2. Consider these statements about the Lord (16, 21)

The very root of human relationship to God (as unbelievers) is terror.

- Israel at Mt. Sinai

3. The natural response to God: terror

- a. In our diagram, in the first box under 'we live in' put *terror*
- b. In the first circle, write in man's first response to the terrible God: *hide from: 'We hide from God'*
 - 1) Response of Adam and Eve in the Garden: hiding, fig leaves
 - 2) Response of Israelites at Sinai: 'Moses, you go talk to him'

3) Response of wicked mankind

- a) Idols – false images of God
- b) Cults – distortions of the truth of God
- c) Denial – refusal to acknowledge God

All these responses are related to fear [terror] – we fear our exposure before the *Holy Justice* of God.

4. The basis of our terror: knowledge of the *Holy Justice* of God

B. The worship factor – the believer (like David, or Solomon) worships God

1. The natural response of the believer: worship

Heb 12.28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

- a. In the last box, write *worship*
- b. The terrorized hide from God, the worshipper: ‘seeks, draws near, submits to’ God

In our circle on the right, fill in:

seek
draw near
submit to

2. The believer is not ignorant of terror

- a. My sin makes me unclean before God (Isa 6.5)
- b. But my God makes me clean in His presence (Isa 6.6-8)

3. The believer opens himself up to God

- a. Confesses sin to God
- b. Confesses sin to others

We have no need to hide, our sin is covered (though we are often ashamed).

4. The basis of our worship: knowledge of the *Perfect Love* of God

C. The growth factors: work down from Worship to Terror by filling in the boxes this way:

1. Trust
2. Devotion
3. Reverence
4. Awe
5. Astonishment
6. Trembling
7. Dread

The progress of faith involves an increase in the knowledge of God

- The better you know God, the more worship you will display.
- The less you know God, the more fearful and suspicious you will be of him.

II. The Rest of the 'Fear of the Lord' Passages

Pr 1.29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD.

Pr 2.5 Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God.

Pr 3.7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

Pr 23.17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, But *live* in the fear of the LORD always.

Pr 24.21 My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those who are given to change,

Conclusion:

"The Fear of God has so great a concern in divine worship, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it, and a worshipper of God is frequently described in Scripture by one that fears him; and particularly internal worship, or

experimental religion, as distinguished from an external observance of the divine commands, is expressed by it; for, according to the wise man, the whole of religion, experimental and practical religion, lies in these two things, to *fear God and keep his commandments*, Eccl. 12:13.”¹

“Understand and grow in the fear of the Lord. The person who fears God will fear nothing else.”²

¹ John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity: Or A System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures*, New Edition, vol. 2 (Tegg & Company, 1839), 377.

² Edward T. Welch, *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man*, Resources for Changing Lives (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Pub, 1997), 96.