

Message Eleven

**The Intrinsic Significance of Fearing the Lord
in the Economy of God**

Scripture Reading: Prov. 1:1, 7; 2:4-5; 3:5-10; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:2, 26-27; 15:16, 33a; 16:6; 19:23

I. The first principle for man to live a proper human life is for him to fear the Lord, to revere the Lord; to fear the Lord is to be in fear of offending Him, of losing His presence, and of not receiving Him as our reward in the next age; we should be in fear of missing the Lord's smile in this age and His reward in the next—Prov. 1:1, 7; Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 5:9-10:

- A. To fear the Lord is to consider and regard Him in everything, never forgetting that He is the wonderful God who has created us (Isa. 43:7); fearing the Lord stops us from doing evil; it also causes us to be touched by the sufferings of others and to show mercy and compassion to them.
- B. To fear the Lord is not only fleeing from sins but also, and even more, rejecting the self; fearing the Lord is not merely to fear that we have sinned or that we are worldly but to fear that what we are doing is out of ourselves, not out of the Lord—Matt. 16:24; 2 Cor. 4:5.
- C. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding; knowledge, wisdom, and understanding come from God; if we fear Him, revere Him, these will be our possessions—Prov. 1:1, 7; 2:4-5; 3:5-10; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:2, 26-27; 15:16, 33a; 16:6; 19:23.

II. Isaiah prophesied that the Spirit of Jehovah—the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of the fear of Jehovah—would rest upon Christ—Isa. 11:1-2:

- A. The Spirit was with the Lord Jesus all the time and was one with Him; He walked by the Spirit and lived a life in, with, by, and through the Spirit; Isaiah 11:2 shows that in the Lord's human living the Spirit was manifested with all the above attributes—Luke 4:1, 14; 10:21; John 1:32; Matt. 12:28.
- B. In His human living, Jesus was filled with the Spirit of the reverential, obedient fear of the Lord; He also delighted in the fear of the Lord; in His resurrection He is now the all-inclusive, bountifully supplying Spirit of Jesus Christ as the Spirit of the fear of Jehovah, who includes the indescribable human living and ministry of the Lord Jesus—Isa. 11:2-3; Phil. 1:19:
 - 1. No human being ever feared God as much as Jesus did; in carrying out God's New Testament ministry, the Lord Jesus told us that He never did anything out of Himself (John 5:19), He did not have His own work (4:34; 17:4), He did not speak His own word (14:10, 24), He did everything not by His own will (5:30), and He did not seek His own glory (7:18).
 - 2. Jesus lived a life in which He did everything in God, with God, and for God; God was in His living, and He was one with God; this is the reality in Jesus (Eph. 4:20-21); we need to ask the Lord as the Spirit of reality to guide us into the reality of experiencing His life of submission and His life of obedience to the Father (John 16:13; Phil. 2:5-11).
 - 3. Day by day we need to completely and absolutely open to the Father and ask Him to fill us with the resurrected Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit, which is also the Spirit of the fear of the Lord that includes the human living and ministry of the Lord Jesus—Luke 11:5-13.

III. To fear God is to trust in Him—Prov. 3:5-8, 26; 16:1, 9, 20, 33; 19:21; 30:5-6:

- A. Proverbs 3:5-8 charges us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not rely on our own understanding; in all our ways we should acknowledge Him, and He will make our paths straight; we should not be wise in our own eyes; we should fear the Lord and depart from evil; this will be healing to our body and refreshment to our bones.
- B. “Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah / And whose trust Jehovah is. / And he will be like a tree transplanted beside water, / Which sends out its roots by a stream, / And will not be afraid when heat comes; / For its leaves remain flourishing, / And it will not be anxious in the year of drought / And will not cease to bear fruit”—Jer. 17:7-8:
 - 1. According to God’s economy, the one who trusts in God is like a tree planted by water, signifying God as the fountain of living waters—2:13.
 - 2. A tree grows beside a river by absorbing all the riches of the water; this is a picture of God’s economy, which is carried out by His dispensing; in order to receive the divine dispensing, we as the trees must absorb God as the water—cf. 1 Cor. 3:6.
 - 3. The riches of the supplying God dispensed into us as the trees constitute us with God’s divinity and cause us to grow into God’s measure (Col. 2:19); in this way we and God become one, having the same element, essence, constitution, and appearance (Rev. 4:3; 21:11).
- C. He who gives heed to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord (Prov. 16:20); the Lord will be our confidence, and He will keep our foot from being caught (3:26).
- D. Those who love God learn the fear of God by coming to the Lord in the Scriptures (2:3-5; John 5:39-40); we are commanded to cleave to and obey the Word of God as the evidence of our fear of God (Deut. 6:2).

IV. To fear the Lord means that we also honor Him:

- A. Proverbs 3:9-10 says that we must honor the Lord with our substance and with the firstfruits of all our produce; then our barns will be filled with plenty, and our vats will burst open with new wine.
- B. We should not be those who make more money to lay up treasure for our future; at least one-tenth, the firstfruits, of our produce must be given to God; we should always be generous in giving of the things that God has given us; this honors God—Mal. 3:7-12; 2 Cor. 9:6-8.
- C. We should beseech the Lord to make our heart single in fearing His name; “Teach me, O Jehovah, Your way; / I will walk in Your truth. / Make my heart single in fearing Your name”—Psa. 86:11.
- D. We need to “cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and of spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”; the fear of God here is not daring to touch things that do not belong to God or are not related to Him—2 Cor. 7:1; 6:17.
- E. To be in the fear of Christ is to fear offending Him as the Head; this involves our being subject to one another; we need to serve the Lord with fear; then we will love the Lord in order to rejoice in and enjoy the Lord—Eph. 5:18-21; Psa. 2:11-12; Heb. 12:28.
- F. We all should have a proper fear of God because we believers in Christ will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; at that time Christ will judge His believers at His coming back, not concerning their eternal salvation but concerning their dispensational reward—2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:4-5; 3:13-15; Rom. 14:10.
- G. Fearing the Lord is a way to lengthen life (Prov. 10:27); God loves, saves, protects, blesses, and provides for those who fear Him (Psa. 103:11, 13, 17; 85:9; 60:4; Prov. 14:26-27; Psa. 115:12-13; 34:9; 111:5).

H. Examples of those who feared the Lord are Noah (Heb. 11:7), Abraham (Gen. 22:12), Joseph (42:18), David (Psa. 2:11-12; 5:7), Nehemiah (Neh. 1:11; 5:9, 15), and the early church (Acts 9:31).

V. The holy fear of the Lord is actually a source of joy (Psa. 2:11) as a fountain of life (Prov. 14:27) and as a tree of life (11:30) to dispense God into us for the carrying out of His economy:

A. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn aside from the snares of death; to fear the Lord, to trust in the Lord, and to take refuge in the name of the Lord are to walk on the paths of life (2:19; 5:6; 10:17; 14:27; 19:23; Psa. 16:11); the paths of life are the paths of the tree of life, the source of which is God Himself (Prov. 3:13, 18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4).

B. The fear of the Lord leads to life; it is the constricted way (the way of the few, not of the many) that leads to life; the paths of life are for us to live in God and thus to touch and obtain life; these paths are the highways that God has put in our heart for us to enter into Him—19:23; Matt. 7:13-14; Psa. 84:5.

C. The ways of death are the ways of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the source of which is Satan and which is manifested in our self; to live in the self is to be without God's presence, to walk in the ways of darkness, and to be void of life—Prov. 2:13; 3:5-7; 14:12; 16:25; Eph. 5:2, 8-9.

VI. God promised to give us, His people, one heart and one way, to fear Him all the days, for our own good and for the good of our children after us, and He puts His fear into our hearts, so that we will not turn away from Him—Jer. 32:39-40:

A. We, the chosen people of God, should all have one heart—to love God, to seek God, to live God, and to be constituted with God that we may be His expression—and one way—the Triune God Himself as the inner law of life with its divine capacity—v. 39; 31:33-34; John 14:6a; Rom. 8:2.

B. This one heart and one way are the one accord (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; Rom. 15:6); divisions result from having a heart for something other than Christ and taking a way other than Christ.

C. God made an eternal covenant, the new covenant; it is by this covenant that God will not turn away from us, and He puts His fear into our hearts, so that we will not turn away from Him—Jer. 32:40.

D. When we fear God, we are instructed by God concerning the way that we should choose, and we are able to know God's intimate counsel and His covenant; only those who fear God can have God's revelation of His covenant, and He gives His intimate counsel only to those who fear Him—Psa. 25:12, 14.

VII. The fear of the Lord and the love of the Lord are two wonderful results of the forgiveness of our sins:

A. God's forgiveness does not cause man to become audacious and reckless; the grace of God's forgiveness brings man into the fear of the Lord; "With You there is forgiveness, / That You would be feared"—130:4.

B. The grace of God's forgiveness also causes us to love God; the reason the sinful woman in Luke loved the Lord much is that she was forgiven much by the Lord—7:39-50.

C. The more the Lord forgives us, the more we fear Him; and the more we fear Him, the more we love Him; on the negative side, because we fear Him, we refrain from doing things that are displeasing to Him; on the positive side, because we love Him, we do things that are pleasing to Him.

VIII. Proverbs 31 presents to us two models of those who fear the Lord; on the one hand, we should be like a king, a royal man like the Lord, having the authority to rule; on the other hand, we should be a worthy woman, knowing how to arrange, manage, take care of, and provide for the needs of the saints in the house of God:

- A. Proverbs 31:3 through 9 speaks of a reigning king—one who does not drink wine but who speaks for the rights of others and ministers justice (typifying Christ and His overcomers); only this kind of person can reign:
1. Our Lord was fully under God’s restriction; hence, He could reign for God; if we can be restricted by God and thus deal with ourselves, we will be able to reign for God.
 2. In ruling over the people, the king first had to be instructed, governed, ruled, and controlled by the word of God; the principle should be the same with the elders in the churches—Deut. 17:14-20:
 - a. In order to administrate, to manage, the church, the elders must be reconstituted with the holy word of God; as a result, they will be under God’s government, under God’s rule and control.
 - b. Then spontaneously, God will be in their decisions, and the elders will represent God to manage the affairs of the church; this kind of management is theocracy.
- B. Proverbs 31:10 through 31 describes a worthy woman (12:4; 19:14; Ruth 3:11)—one who is wise, kind, diligent, and capable and who can arrange, manage, and provide for her household; “Her price is far above corals” (Prov. 31:10); her glory surpasses all her peers (v. 29); this worthy woman typifies the church and the saints who love the Lord:
1. The main characteristic of a worthy woman is that she fears the Lord (reverently worshipping, obeying, serving, and trusting the Lord with awe-filled respect); “Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; / But a woman who fears Jehovah, she will be praised”—v. 30.
 2. The heart of the husband of a worthy woman trusts in her; “She does him good and not evil / All the days of her life” (v. 12); “Her husband is known in the gates, / When he sits among the elders of the land” (v. 23).
 3. Such a worthy and prudent woman is from the Lord as the crown of her husband (12:4); her children and husband rise up and call her blessed (31:28); her husband also praises her by saying that she surpasses all others (v. 29).
 4. A husband should be able to see with his own eyes his wife’s “pure manner of life in fear”; her adorning should not be the outward plaiting of hair and putting on of gold or clothing with garments, “but the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptible adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, which is very costly in the sight of God”—1 Pet. 3:1-4.
 5. In the proper church life the sisters should “adorn themselves in proper clothing with modesty and sobriety [self-restraint], not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, what befits women professing godly reverence, by good works”; godly reverence is a godly fear toward God, a revering and honoring of God, as is fitting for one who worships God—1 Tim. 2:9-10.
 6. Older women should be reverent in their behavior, their deportment, so that “they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be of a sober mind, pure, workers at home, good, subject to their own husbands, that the word of God would not be blasphemed”—Titus 2:3-5.
- C. In the aspect of overcoming, we should be like a king; in the aspect of loving the Lord, we should be like a worthy woman; being like this will cause us to have value and glory before the Lord.