



A Healthy Fear

I am driving and listening to a chunk of passages from the Bible. A profound sadness falls on me like a heavy blanket. I don't voice it, but I could have easily uttered, "We're so screwed!"

Even though the following words are not directly part of the narrative I was listening to, one phrase hammers my brain: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Even though "fear" (Hebrew: *yirah*) in this context doesn't mean terror or fright, I do get a dose of that. It actually signifies profound reverence, awe, and respect for the Creator.

When I've pondered this in the past, I typically use fire, deadly heights, or the massive inertia of a loaded 18-wheeler as tangible examples of things to fear. We should respect these things if we want to live.

The source of my sudden sadness lies with our collective human tendency to elevate ourselves and see ourselves as better or smarter than we are. Are we capable of good? Yes. And God made us, and He called it good. But that's not what I'm focused on.

Regardless of whether an individual claims to honor and follow Yahweh - the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - we each will occasionally (if not constantly) decide we know better than others - including God.

For some, that will include denying God's existence or claiming some faith apart from a Jesus-enabled salvation. But even for those who either actually follow Christ or give lip service to that life, we often recoil from things we don't like or things we struggle with that are attributed to God in the scriptures.

It's understandable that we don't like parts of the Bible. Among those who dedicate their lives to understanding it, there are clearly things we don't know for sure and will have to learn from God in the future.

Those struggles and uncomfortable topics are part of any person's process of working out their faith. And yet, that's also not the part that makes me sad.

In reality, when pressed into true honesty (which rarely happens), the majority of people will find some topic they will elevate and decide differently on, as if they know better.

Whether the Christian faith is well-represented by your local flavors of the universal church, individuals often appear to lose their healthy fear of the Lord when it comes to their pet topics.

Faith, hope, and love are the things we should value above other things. Our thoughts regarding the political, economic, or social ways to live those things out cannot outweigh the actual presence of them in our lives or our direct pursuit of the Lord. Otherwise, our self-righteousness and pride are the real priorities.

And none of us will successfully navigate this life and these various topics without the beginning of wisdom. And what is that? It's fear of the Lord.

We humans always tend towards thinking too highly of ourselves. That truth works for truly good people just like it has for the whole lot of us for millennia before. People are people in this regard.

I'm dedicated to encouraging people towards God, not deciding whether you're in or out. I pray you've got some sense of your own trajectory.

The question is this: Is your heart seeking your Creator, or are you claiming to be good based on a lifestyle, quest, or something you claim as virtue?

Don't be the fool described in Proverbs. Fear the Lord.

Scriptural Foundations

Psalm 103:1–22 (NIV)

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so **great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.** As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But **from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him,** and his righteousness with their children's children—with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, my soul.

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Psalm 111:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever."

Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but **fools despise wisdom and instruction.**"