

Gleanings from the Book of Proverbs

The Fear of the Lord

Scripture Reading: Psalm 34:1-22

As Solomon credited his father David for teaching him to seek God’s wisdom (Proverbs 4:1-9), so it is fitting that we take a psalm of David to introduce the teaching, in the book of Proverbs, concerning the fear of the Lord. In Psalm 34, we have several important ways to relate to God. We are to:

- Bless the Lord – Psalm 34:1-3
- Seek the Lord – Psalm 34:4-6
- Fear the Lord – Psalm 34:7-16
- Humbly Trust the Lord – Psalm 34:8, 17-22

“The fear of the Lord” is a subject that is relevant to both Old and New Testaments. It is not an outdated subject (II Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 2:12-13; Hebrews 12:28-29). As we shall see, “the fear of the Lord” is foundational to true knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. There is a knowledge that is academic and can be applied with skill and craft. Though it can do many wonderful things, it can also be used in a proud, aggressive, or in a destructive way. The knowledge, wisdom, and understanding that truly profits us, is rooted in godly character and behavior (I Corinthians 8:1; I Timothy 6:3-6; Titus 1:1; James 3:13-18 cp. Isaiah 48:17-18).

Do not mistake “the fear of the Lord” for the terror and dread that many people experience now, and all unbelievers will experience at God’s white throne judgement (Revelation 21:8 cp. Revelation 20:11-15; II Corinthians 5:11). The believer’s “fear of the Lord” is reverent respect and awe. It causes the believer to run **to** God, not **from** Him. This reverence is shown through humble, loving submission to God’s Word, respect and love for the ministry of the gospel, and for God’s people.

Note the very good book written by Jerry Bridges, “The Joy of Fearing God” (Random House)

In this study we will search the Book of Proverbs for what it has to say about “the fear of the Lord.” Some passages will give us definition. Others will recommend “the fear of the Lord” and encourage us. Some passages will give us solemn warnings. Some passages combine all these features.

“The Fear of the Lord” – Defined

“The Fear of the Lord” starts the path to true knowledge and wisdom. It humbles us and leads us to obedience and blessings. “The fear of the Lord” brings us to harmony with God (Isaiah 66:2b).

- Proverbs 1:7 cp. Psalm 111:10
- Proverbs 2:1-5
- Proverbs 8:13 (Lady Wisdom is speaking – Proverbs 8:1-4)

“The Fear of the Lord” – Recommended

Though problems and sufferings take place in the believer’s life (Psalm 34:19), the over-all trend is that those who fear the Lord will experience blessings, now and forever. No one who fears the Lord shall regret doing so (Psalm 34:9).

- Proverbs 14:26-27
- Proverbs 15:16, 31-33
- Proverbs 16:6
- Proverbs 19:23
- Proverbs 22:4
- Proverbs 23:17-18 cp. Proverbs 29:25-26

“The Fear of the Lord” – Warnings

Benefits that would be lost, if we do not fear the Lord, are only part of the warning. There are terrible consequences that we would risk if we chose to ignore / reject God’s call and go a different path in life.

- Proverbs 1:29 (Lady Wisdom is speaking – Proverbs 1:20-31)
- Proverbs 10:27-32
- Proverbs 13:13
- Proverbs 21:30
- Proverbs 28:13-14

“The Fear of the Lord” – The Call of Christ

As we can see Lady Wisdom call men to fear the Lord (Proverbs 1:20-31; 8:1-4, 13; 9:1-4, 10-11), So we see Christ and the gospel, today, doing the same thing.

Isaiah 11:1-2 is a prophecy of Christ’s coming. Among seven things that describe Him, we can see that the Messiah will have “...*the spirit... of the fear of the LORD.*”

Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5 – Jesus taught people to fear God, not man (Isaiah 2:17-22).