

The Fear of God: Ingredients, Part 3

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In our previous studies, we have first of all sought to grasp something of the predominance of this theme in Holy Scripture. And I'm sure for anyone who has read his or her Bible for even a brief period of time, there is a conviction that the fear of God is not some concept that is tucked away in a few remote portions of Scripture. But it's found in the very main stream of Scriptural thought. And therefore, to be ignorant of the fear of God is to be ignorant and devoid of the religion which is set forth in Holy Scripture.

Then we grappled for a couple of weeks with the meaning of the fear of God as it comes to us in Holy Scripture. And we saw that, just as there are two aspects of fear in human experience, so there are two facets to the fear of God. There is the fear of dread and terror, and there is the fear of reverence and awe. Unregenerate men may have the fear of dread and terror. It's no indication of the presence of grace for a man to be afraid of God in the sense that Adam was after he sinned; in the sense that Felix was when he trembled at the thought of coming judgment. That fear is simply an indication that a man has not been given up to hardness of heart and a seared conscience. But though its presence is no evidence of grace, a total abstinence of it may be indeed, not only the indication of a hardened conscience in an unregenerate man but an evidence of very defective thinking in the life of a believer. For there is a sense in which we never get beyond this aspect of the fear of God, the fear of terror at the thought of His judgments, at thought of His rod which will fall upon us as His children if we walk in paths of disobedience. However, the predominant concept of Scripture regarding the fear of God is that fear of reverence and awe, the very presence of which is an indication of the working of God's grace in the heart of a man. The best summary statement I know is that which is given in Professor Murray's book *Principles of Christian Conduct* in which he states, "The controlling sense of the majesty and holiness of God, and the profound reverence which this apprehension draws forth, constitutes the essence of the fear of God." And in that sense, then, we will fear God for all eternity. We will never get beyond that sense of profound reverence which is rooted in an apprehension of His character. In fact, we might say is that what we know of the fear of God now is only a little part of what we shall know in that day, for now we see through a glass darkly. But then we shall see face to face and know even as we are known. And so when you turn to the book of the Revelation and find pictures of the redeemed in heaven, you find them crying out, "Who shall not fear Thee, O God." Even in this state He is worthy of fear.

And then for several weeks now we've been trying to grapple with the essential ingredients of the fear of God. Having seen the predominant note of this truth; something of its meaning, now we're asking the question, what ingredients comprise the fear of God? If that fear is to be planted in my own heart; if that fear is to grow

and develop in my heart, what things must be present in me, and what things must be developed? And we thus far considered two of the essential ingredients of the fear of God. The first was, there must be right views of the character of God. There will be no fear of God unless there are right views of His holy character. As one servant of Christ has said,

"But whatever the reason [he's speaking of the fact that there's so little thinking on the fear of God in our day] the eclipse of the fear of God, whether viewed as a doctrine or an attitude, evidences a deterioration of faith in the living God. Biblical faith means the fear of God, because the only God is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. And His name is glorious and fearful. If we know God, we must know Him in the matchless glory of His transcendent majesty. And the only appropriate posture for us when we see Him as He is is to be prostrate before Him in awe and in reverence. To do otherwise is to deny the greatness of God, and to deny His greatness is infidelity. The pervasive emphasis of Scripture upon the fear of God as the determining attitude of heart and life in both religion and ethics is a characteristic mark of the people of God."

So then, there will not be fear of God in us unless we entertain right views of the character of God. And I think it's obvious to any thinking person that this is perhaps the most pivotal reason as to why the fear of God, the sense of awe and wonder, has left the church. It's because the God of Scripture has been abandoned for a substitute, who is this formless glob of sentiment called love before which no one dreads and trembles and fears, but which they can snuggle up to when they get good and ready. So there are to be right views of the character of God if there is to be the fear of God.

Then last week we considered the second great ingredient: there must be a pervasive sense of the presence of God. That this great God is not that God out there somewhere. But in the light of Psalm 139, this great God is here, and He is here now. "Do not I fill heaven and earth saith the Lord?" And the essence, then, of walking in the fear of God is to walk, not only with right views of God entertained in the mind and heart but to walk in the sense of His presence. God said to Abraham, "Walk before Me and be thou perfect."

Now we come to the third essential ingredient of the fear of God. And these three things that I've given you are not inspired. As with any kind of topical preaching, one must try to gather the Biblical materials, reduce them to their essential elements, and then lay them out. When John Bunyan wrote in double columns what would be if it were in single columns and normal print about a 150 page book on the fear of God, he came up with eleven ingredients of the fear of God. I came up with three. Well, who's right, John Bunyan or myself? Well, I hope we're both right. All John Bunyan did was to break these things down under different headings. And I feel that most of his headings can be gathered under the three that I've given to you. I mention this so that you will not in any way think that I claim inspiration for these things. It's simply an attempt to bring together and to collate under these specific headings what Scripture teaches on the fear of God. What then is the third essential ingredient of the fear of God? If it starts with right views of the character of God joined with the pervasive sense of the presence of God, then the fear of God will be evidenced in what I'm calling a constraining awareness of one's obligation to God. In other words, to live in the fear of God is not only to know who He is and that He is here. But in the circumstance in which I find myself, the most important issue is my obligation to this

great God who is here. Do you see the connection of this? To walk in the fear of God is to walk not only with right views of God which would illicit awe and reverence, to walk in the sense that He is here (the pervasive sense of His presence), but that in the presence of that great God who is here, the most necessary thing is to know and discharge my obligation to Him. To quote one servant of Christ,

"The fear of God implies our constant consciousness of our relationship to God. While we are also related to angels, demons, and things, our primary relationship is to God, and all other relationships are determined by and are to be interpreted in terms of our relationship to Him. The first thought of a Godly man in every circumstance is God's relationship to him in it and his relationship to God."

Now let me give you a very current illustration of this. Right now sitting where you sit, you are all related--and let me take the author's terms--to angels. If you're a child of God, angels have been sent forth as ministering spirits to do service to the heirs of salvation. You are also related to men. Some of you are blood relatives. Some of you, the man next to you is your father; some of you, the woman next to you is your mother. You have a relationship to one another as casual friends, as pastor to flock: all kinds of human relationships right here and now. You're related to angels. You're related to men. You're related to demons. I don't know precisely how many demons may be actually present here this morning. But Scripture tells us that they are an organized force; that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but with principalities and powers; against spiritual wickedness. There are sometimes I need no faith to believe demons are here. I can feel their opposition to the preaching of the Word. At other times I wonder if maybe the Lord has cleared the atmosphere of them, at least in this geographical area. But you have a relationship to demons. You have a relationship to men. You have a relationship to angels. You have a relationship to things. You're related to that pew on which you sit and about which you make an assessment as to its being comfortable or uncomfortable. Now, you have many relationships here this morning. But if you came into this building in the fear of God, you came and sit here recognizing that the only relationship which really matters as the one which takes president over every other relationship is that which you sustain to God. And your concern has been as you've sat here in the previous 35 or 40 minutes is, what is God's relationship to me, and what is my relationship to Him? What does He require of me, and am I rendering what He requires of me as I sit here this morning? So if you have been worshipping in the fear of God, the evidence of that will be, or the essential ingredient of it has already been that this relationship, yours to God and God to yours, and all that's involved in that by way of obligation and submission and obedience--that has been the most important thing. Now, has that been the most important thing to you? Or has your relationship to your watch been the most important thing, and you're saying, "Boy, I've suffered through two quarters of this; only one quarter to go." Has that been your attitude? Or has your relationship to your father and mother been the most important to you--"I'm here because Mom and Dad said I had to be, so I'll suffer it out." Or has your relationship to your reputation been the most important thing--"I'm a member of that church, and if I don't go, people will think I'm all fussed and bothered and the rest, so I'll show up." Has that been what's brought you here this morning? You see how practical this is. What has been the most pressing issue to you from the time you walked through here and even before you came here and thought to come here? If you are walking in the fear of God, then you have been walking in this constraining awareness of your obligation to Him.

Now, having stated the principle, secondly, let me seek to lay out before you what is the essence of our obligation to God. If an essential ingredient of the fear of God is not only right views of His character and a pervasive sense of His presence but a constraining awareness of my obligation to Him, what then is the essence of my obligation to God--right here this morning, when I go out to work, when I spend that time with my girlfriend, when I sit at my desk in school tomorrow, when I go to the workbench in the place of business? I believe anyone acquainted with the Scriptures would agree that all of our obligation to God can be broken down into three great headings. Number one: to love Him supremely. Number two: to obey Him implicitly. And number three: to trust Him completely.

Love Him supremely. I don't need to support that from Scripture. What is the first and great commandment? What is the summation of all that God requires of us? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." To love Him supremely. And then as the only proof of that love, to obey Him implicitly. Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And then to trust Him completely. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." There must be the carrying out of obedience in the expression of love in the context of trust. Trust Him completely. So then, to be in the fear of God is to recognize these things and to live accordingly. Here I am in a relationship with my children, my wife, my job, my boss, my neighbors, my house, my car: men, angels, things. And in all of those relationships, the man who walks in the fear of God seeks to remember and be constrained by the recognition of His obligation to God: love Him supremely. So then, if he senses an affection for his wife which begins to border on idolatry; if he says, "Honey, I think I ought to go to prayer meeting." And she says, "I'll miss you. I want you at home." He says, "Sorry, dear, my God commands me to gather with His people." And he shows that in that situation where he risks the frown of his wife or the frown of his God, the smile of his God is more important. And if he doesn't do that, he's not walking in the fear of God. He's set up an idol in His heart. And that shiny new car glistens in the showroom, it's not a matter now of good economic planning, (he's going to have to invest so much on the old one, so it would be better to get the new one), but it's simply the fact that it sure would look nice. Now, of course, it means he wouldn't be able to increase his giving commensurate to his increase in salary last year. O yes, God says, "Honor Me with the first fruits of all your increase." And his giving is to be proportionate as God has blessed, but he sure would like to have that shiny new car. And now he's in a relationship where he's going to love paint and chrome more than his God; he's not walking in the fear of God. If he's walking in the fear of God, he won't have that idolatrous attachment to that new car. Now, is the pastor saying you shouldn't get new cars? No, I didn't say any such thing. All I'm saying is if the motivation is such that it means that you place such a love upon that thing which contradicts supreme love to God and implicit obedience to God, then you're not walking in the fear of God. To love Him supremely so that Jesus, when He calls men to Himself, says, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." If you come to Jesus, even legitimate love for yourself, which expresses itself in the desire to preserve yourself, that must be sacrificed. A love for yourself must go beyond that so that you're expendable. You don't look upon length of days and retirement at 65 and 20 years down in some little Christian community in Florida as your ambition. You're expendable. So when people say, "Doing that might get you in trouble," you say, "I'm sorry, my life's not mine anyway." This is the principle.

The essence of our obligation to God: to love God supremely; to obey Him implicitly. Now, we've got to obey the laws of the land. God tells us to obey them that have the rule over you within the church (ecclesiastical leadership). We're to obey the government. We have to obey our superiors. Ah, but He is to be obeyed implicitly. And if there is any contradiction of the expressed will of any superior appointed by God, be it civil or ecclesiastical, whatever realm, then Acts 5:29 comes in where Peter says, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Notice the word "ought." It is our obligation, Peter says, to obey God rather than man. Here was this man walking in the fear of God, and walking in the fear of God, he said, "I have an obligation which transcends the obligation to obey you men. The obligation is to obey my God."

You get the idea now of the principle? Now let me seek to illustrate that principle by two great Scriptural examples. I've given you a number of examples. But now I want to pinpoint this third aspect of the fear of God: a constraining awareness of our obligation to Him. The essence of that obligation: love Him supremely, obey Him implicitly, and trust Him completely. I want to take an illustration from the Old Testament and then an illustration from the New. The Old Testament illustration we looked at in part last week. It's this great man called the friend of God, this man Abraham. Now, remember what we're trying to do as we look at this portion is to see the third element of the fear of God exemplified in Abraham, this constraining awareness of his obligation to God being the supreme obligation: loving Him, obeying Him, and trusting Him. Genesis 22:1:

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. [God acknowledges His awareness of the depth of Abraham's affection for his son.] And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him"

Then you know the story: how that he took hold of the knife, and then God stays his hand. Verses 11-12: "And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." Verse 18: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice." Now God says this was a test. Verse 1: "God did tempt [prove] Abraham." And He was proving him at the very point of our study. He was proving the reality and depth of his fear of God, for when he passes the test, God says in verse 12, "Now I know that thou fearest God." This was the point of test: not love primarily, not trust primarily but primarily the depth and reality of his fear of God. Now, what was involved in that? May I suggest that that which was involved was not only Abraham's right views of the character of God, a pervasive sense of the presence of God ("walk before Me, and be thou perfect." He's called the friend of God; he cultivated His presence), but here we see demonstrated in Abraham the fear of God revealing itself in this constraining awareness of Abraham's obligation to God: to love Him supremely. "Abraham, you deeply love Isaac, but do you love Me more?" "Yes, God, I love you more." "All right, prove it." He takes hold of the knife, ready to plunge it into the breast of his own son. He demonstrated that his obligation to love God was supreme. Sure he was to love Isaac as his son, and he found this no burden. This

was the delight of his heart. This child was given to him when he was past the age when men can father children and when women can be mothers. And so this was no burden to love Isaac. And there was the depth of that attachment naturally. And then added to that, the fact that all the covenant promises terminated upon Isaac, and he could see in Isaac the whole ongoing of God's purposes of grace. And so there was that love which had not only a natural stream but a stream of spiritual identification and of spiritual purpose: all the covenant promises tied up in Isaac. And yet in the midst of that depth of love, Abraham reveals his determination to love his God supremely. Secondly, he reveals his determination to obey Him implicitly. Notice verse 18: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice." "Abraham, you hear the voice of your natural affection for your child. And that voice cries out, 'Don't offer him as a sacrifice.' But Abraham, you've heard My voice which says, Take thy son and offer him. And Abraham, you've obeyed My voice, not the voice of natural affection." Then there was the voice of natural reasoning: "Abraham, if you offer up Isaac, all the covenant promises terminate upon Isaac's head. How can you take and offer Isaac unto death and still see the promises fulfilled in him?" And there the voice of natural wisdom cries out. But he says, "The voice of God, that's the voice I'm obligated to obey, not the voice of natural affection, not the voice of human wisdom but the voice of the God who called me in Ur of the Chaldee in sovereign grace and mercy, that's the voice I'm to obey." And then he trusted Him completely. You say, "How do you find that?" Well, I'm so glad the inspired writer of Hebrews (whoever he was) has told us what went on in Abraham's mind while he made his trip up that mountain side. I might guess what went on in his mind. But we don't need to guess about some things, for we read in Hebrews 11:17-19 this statement of what went on in Abraham's mind:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, [remember at the point of the depth of his fear of God] offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, if whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

What was he doing? Not only loving God supremely, obeying Him implicitly but trusting Him completely saying,

"All right, God, if You've got to raise him up to fulfill the promises, You're able to do it. The very fact that there's an Isaac, it's almost like there's a figure of a resurrection. That You could have brought a living boy from a man whose body was as incapable of being a father, as though it had been in the grave--God, if You can give me a resurrection son by birth, then it's perfectly possible for You to raise him up, though his body is dead, for he's the son of a dead man."

Isn't that what Romans says? He looked at his own body as good as dead as far as having any power to procreate, and the deadness of Sarah's womb. So he says if two dead people can produce a living son by virtue of the power of God, then that same God can take a dead son and make a living one out of him. And here is witness to the strength and the completeness of Abraham's faith. So I say that Abraham's fear of God, which is the one virtue singled out above all others in our Lord's response to the test, is a fear which expressed itself in a constraining awareness of his obligation to the living God.

May I by way of application say that this is precisely the thing to which God calls us. When He says to us concerning our Isaacs, "Lovest thou Me more than this or more than these?" And He calls upon us to walk in a course which immediately brings up the voice of natural affection. I heard this past week in a situation that just made me want to reel--and I hear of them with recurring frequency--where you have Christian fathers and mothers who have certain ambitions for their children, and then when God seems to be leading in a different direction, not contrary to His Word but contrary to their own carnal ambitions, they seek to hinder their own children from following the will of God. God says, "Obey Me, not the voice of natural affection, not the voice of natural inclination and human wisdom." You parents, what are your ambitions for your children? If God were to summon you into His presence right now and gaze into your eyes with those eyes which are as a flame of fire before whom all things are naked and open so you couldn't fudge, and God were to say, "What do you want for your children?" Could you answer hardly without thinking,

"O God, I have one ambition, that they be what You want them to be. If that means you want to save them at age 7 and take them home at age 9, Thy will be done. If that means you want to lay hold of them and send them out to some obscure place to die in the eyes of the world and the church, total failures in poverty, so be it, Lord."

Could you say that? If not, my dear parents, you do not walk in the fear of God. You don't love God supremely. You love your own cherished ambitions for your children. I'm not talking as a bachelor. I've got three children. Where are your ambitions? Do you love Him supremely and His purpose for those children? Or will the voice of natural affection and the voice of human wisdom and personal ambition dominate. Not if you're walking in the fear of God, for if you're walking in the fear of God, there will be that constraining awareness of your obligation to love Him supremely, to obey Him implicitly, and to trust Him completely. I say to some of you young people, who have perhaps a deep and intimate relationship with your parents, the time may come when the voice of God says to you, "This is the way you must move." You say, "But Lord, if I do that, Mom and Dad won't understand. Mom and Dad may turn against me." What are you going to do? At that point you need to say, "O God, by Your Spirit, so flood my heart with your fear that I will be constrained by the consciousness that my obligation is essentially, primarily, and supremely to You." There may times when the only way you can walk down the pathway of the will of God is to step on your own father and mother's heart. You have to do it with tears. You have to do it with a sense of inner grief. But there are times when the only way you can walk down the path of the revealed will of God is to step on your own parents' heart. Isn't that what Jesus said? "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." And He said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Did our Lord say that heartlessly? No, no. Did He say that as some wild enthusiast just seeking to create some kind of disturbance? No, He said it as the meek, tender Lamb of God. But He said it out of the realism that when His Spirit sends His fear into the hearts of His people; when He calls them by grace, that fear rooted in right views of the character of God, producing a pervasive sense of the presence of God will bring them to that place of a constraining awareness of their obligation to God to obey Him implicitly, even if it means the severance of the deepest of human ties. Has the fear of God so worked in you? It did in Abraham.

Then there is perhaps the most beautiful example in the life of our blessed Lord Himself. And He is not only the one to whom we are joined in that vital and mystical union taught so often in Scripture, but He is also our great example. 1 John 2:6: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." And Scripture says of our Lord in Isaiah 11:2 that the Spirit who would rest upon Him was, among other things, the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. Then in Malachi, a passage I wasn't aware of until recently, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it certainly seems that He alone can fit the prophecy which is directed to Levi. Malachi 2:5: "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared Me, and was afraid before My name." The Lord Jesus walked in the fear of God. Not the fear of dread and of terror, though He did have dread and terror at the thought of the wrath of His Father being poured upon Him, but He walked in that sense of reverential awe.

Now, how did the fear of God operate upon Him? Notice these three things again in our Lord. It shows itself particularly when we come to that inner sanctuary of Gethsemane and Calvary, that He loved His Father supremely. As a true man, He loved life. As the son of the Father's bosom, He loved and delighted in His conscious communion with the Father. He could say, "Father, I know that Thou hearest Me always." But now the Father's plan for the Son demands that He walk down a path in which He will be stripped of the sensible comfort of the support of God. He won't be stripped of the fact of God's support but of the comfort and the enjoyment of the supporting hand of the Father. He will have to give up life itself. And in our Lord, as a true man, this was a difficult thing, for men do not like to relinquish life. Death is a foreign element introduced to humanity. That's why we recoil from it. That's why we dread death. That's why we fear even the experience of dying. Though as Christians we don't fear death, we fear the experience of actually dying, because it's an unnatural thing for there to be this terrible severance of soul and body, a rending apart what God had joined together and will again join together in the world to come. And yet the Lord Jesus so walked in the Spirit of the fear of the God that His supreme love to the Father causes Him to say, "Not My will, but Thine be done." Though everything within Him recoils--and we just overlap these first two principles--Scripture says in Philippians 2 that He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." And in the midst of that supreme love to the Father and that implicit obedience, our Lord's trust in the Father was put to its deepest test. Someone has said that our Lord's last words upon the cross "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit" were perhaps the greatest act of faith ever exercised upon God's world. Here was no sensible delight of the Father's countenance. The heavens shrouded in blackness; the Son of God feeling in Himself the Father's wrath and displeasure against the sins of His people. In that situation where Isaiah 50: 10 was more fully realized than in anyone else, here He was the servant of God who obeyed the voice of God walking in darkness. The heavens shrouded in darkness, and yet He so stays Himself upon His Father and the certainty of the Father's promise that He says in this act of naked faith, "Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." So in our blessed Lord we see how the fear of God operates. In every single relationship, even in the mystery of Gethsemane and the cross, He was not only held by proper views of God, walking in that pervasive sense of the presence of God but constrained by the awareness of His supreme obligation to God: "Not My will, but Thine be done."

So one is not surprised to find the fear of God often linked immediately with the whole matter of obedience. Deuteronomy 10:12-13: "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD

thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Child of God, would you grow more in the fear of God and walk in that fear? Then you and I must constantly remind ourselves of this fact: as I stand and where I stand in this present relationship, the most important thing is my relationship to God and what He requires of me in this circumstance. This God, glorious in Himself, this God who made me, this God who redeemed me, this God is the one to whom I owe allegiance. So when it means I must pair off a little corner of truth in order to keep the smile of my boss, I can't do it. Why? Because of my obligation to the God who's commanded me to speak only the truth. See the ethical implications. Though everything in me in that situation cries out for the gratification of some physical appetite in that circumstance with that young man or woman, and my passions cry out, "Gratify me!" and my flesh cries out, "Indulge me!"--in that situation my God says, "Flee youthful lusts." "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" And there is the constraining sense of the supremacy of my obligation to Him. So then, we must constantly remind ourselves of the fact that, as we stand and where we stand, our obligations to God are supreme. We must constantly remind ourselves of what obedience involves and constantly seek to enlarge the scope of our understanding of what God requires by the meditation upon and searching out of the precepts of God in His Word, and then constantly pray for grace to forget all else that would blind us to this.

Then I think we see, for those of you who are not Christians, this is the explanation of why you live the way you do. Romans 3:18 says of uncovered people, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Why do you live the way you live? Because you have no profound sense of the greatness of God's person, no pervasive sense of His presence, and no constraining awareness of your obligation to Him. That's why you can cheat at school. That's why you can lie to Mom and Dad. That's why you can open your mouth in cursing. That's why you can give your body to sensual indulgence. And my friend, you'll go on that way until God is pleased to give you a new heart. For Jeremiah 32:39-40 says that in the new covenant, God's distinct work is to put His fear within our hearts that we shall not depart from Him. The Holy Spirit never comes into the heart of a man or woman, boy or girl but what He comes as the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. And so if you have no fear of the Lord, it's because you're devoid of the Spirit. And "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And so you can't conjure this up. You can't crank it out. The God of grace and mercy who has treasured up in His Son all that is necessary for the salvation of men bids you look to Him through His Son and cry to Him that in grace He would be pleased to grant you a new heart and to grant you the Spirit who is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

So then, the third indispensable ingredient of the fear of God is this constraining awareness of our obligation to Him. May God grant that it shall so grip us and be our portion that even our worship as we gather again tonight will be different, that every other relationship will fade into the background in light of this relationship of ourselves to our great God. And may we in every circumstance of life be given to know and constantly reminded of this principle so that we shall be in the fear of God, as Scripture commands us, all the day long.

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