

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Proverbs 1:7

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.**

Proverbs 9:10

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:
and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.**

Job 28:28

**...Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding.**

It is interesting to note that we don't hear much about the fear of God anymore, even in many churches. In days gone by you would hear the phrase, "He is a God-fearing man". You don't hear that much any more today. Instead, as an indication of where our society is, we see the opposite of the fear of God. Just look at one of the popular sayings of today, NO FEAR! You see this saying on T-shirts, bumper stickers, and on the back of truck windows. Isn't it interesting that one of the chief characteristics Paul lists when describing unbelieving men in Romans 3:18 is that "there is no fear of God before their eyes". Many, even in the churches, have been led to believe that the fear of the Lord is an Old Testament concept. They are wrongly taught that we are not to fear God anymore. Still others believe and teach that the fear of the Lord is nothing more than reverence and awe. I recently heard a Bible teacher say that fearing God is much like looking out at the ocean, you are awed by its greatness, that's all! But is this what the Bible teaches concerning the fear of the Lord? How important is the fear of the Lord according to God's Word? The purpose of this booklet is to do a brief survey of God's Word concerning the fear of the Lord. By understanding the importance placed upon the fear of the Lord in the Bible, we are better prepared to understand what role fearing God should have in our life. It is the author's intention to show in this study that **if you do not have a true fear of God in your life, you do not have Biblical Christianity**. For apart from the fear of God, there can be no true knowledge of God.

According to our opening verses, the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. But it is not only the beginning of wisdom and knowledge, it is in fact WISDOM! To better understand its importance, let me illustrate. When

teaching a child to read, you must begin by teaching them the alphabet, the ABC's. If one doesn't know the alphabet, it is impossible to read. So we can say that the ABC's are the beginning of learning how to read. But not only are the ABC's the beginning of learning how to read, they are also the most important part, the chief part of reading. What do I mean by that? Without the ABC's, without the alphabet, you can't even have words! Without words, you can't read! So we can say that the ABC's are the beginning of learning how to read, and they are also the chief part of reading. Without the ABC's you cannot read! It is like trying to walk without taking a step. You can't do it! Walking is taking step after step. Words are letters of the alphabet arranged in a certain manner. Without the letters of the alphabet, you can't have words.

Now what is the point of all this? According to God's Word, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. Understanding the fear of the Lord is the first step in having true knowledge and wisdom. But not only is it the beginning of knowledge and wisdom, the fear of the Lord IS wisdom! Now let's go back to our ABC's for a minute. Just as the ABC's are the beginning of knowing how to read, so the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowing God. The word 'beginning' in Proverbs 1:7 means the chief, or main thing. It also means the first in place, time, and rank. We see that God's Word places great importance upon the fear of the Lord.

Now notice the last half of Proverbs 1:7, "but fools despise wisdom and instruction". When we think of despising something today, we usually think in terms of complete rejection or hatred. A man who despises someone or something, completely rejects or hates that person or thing they despise. But the word for 'despise' in Proverbs 1:7 simply means "to disrespect, to hold as insignificant". In other words, a fool doesn't hold the fear of the Lord as very important or significant. Sadly, many teachers today would rather dwell on only positive things, and they are unwilling to give the importance God's Word does to the subject of the fear of the Lord. Yet without a true fear of God there can be no deliverance or freedom from sin. As sad as it is, many churches just don't teach on this subject any more. When was the last time you heard a message on the 'Fear of God' in your church?

According to Proverbs 13:13, "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed." That does not mean we must hate and utterly reject God's Word to bring destruction upon ourselves, rather, the man who doesn't hold God's Word as very important will be destroyed. Likewise, Proverbs 23:22 says, "despise not thy mother when she is old". This does not mean "don't hate her when she is old", it really is teaching us not to neglect her when she is old. In other words, don't hold her as insignificant. Instead, we are to respect her, love her, give our mother her rightful honor. According to the two verses above, anything less than a great respect for your mother and the Word of God, is sin.

Having seen that the fear of the Lord is the beginning, the chief part of knowledge and wisdom, let us now consider Ecclesiastes 12:13:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

According to this verse, fearing God and keeping His commandments is the conclusion, the termination, the whole duty of man. Any man who does not fear the Lord in the Biblical sense of the word, is failing to perform his duty before the God of this universe! Obviously, God's Word places great importance upon the fear of the Lord. Is this the importance you have placed upon the fear of the Lord?

A SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

We will proceed by briefly looking at some verses from Genesis to Revelation that show us the importance of the fear of the Lord.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 22:12 - 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.

Genesis 31:42 - Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the **fear of Isaac**, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

Genesis 31:53 - The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the **fear of his father Isaac**.

Exodus 18:21 - Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as **fear God**, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

Exodus 20:20 - And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and **that his fear may be before your faces**, that ye sin not.

Deuteronomy 4:9-10 - Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to **fear me** all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

Deuteronomy 5:29 - O that there were such an heart in them, that they would **fear me**, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Deuteronomy 28:58-59 - If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest **fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD**; Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.

II Samuel 23:1-3 - Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the **fear of God**.

Job 1:1 - There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that **feared God**, and eschewed evil.

Job 1:8 - And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that **feareth God**, and escheweth evil?

Job 28:28 - And unto man he said, Behold, the **fear of the Lord**, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Psalms 2:11 - Serve the LORD with **fear**, and rejoice with trembling.

Psalms 5:7 - But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and **in thy fear** will I worship toward thy holy temple.

Psalms 25:14 - The secret of the LORD is with them that **fear him**; and he will shew them his covenant.

Psalms 36:1 - The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is **no fear of God** before his eyes.

Psalms 67:7 - God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall **fear him**.

Psalms 85:9 - Surely his salvation is nigh them that **fear him**; that glory may dwell in our land.

Psalms 89:7 - God is greatly to be **feared** in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

Psalms 103:11 - For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that **fear him**.

Psalm 103:13 - Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that **fear him**.

Psalm 103:17 - But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that **fear him**, and his righteousness unto children's children...

Psalm 119:38 - Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is **devoted to thy fear**.

Psalm 119:120 - My flesh trembleth for **fear of thee**; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Psalm 130:4 - But there is forgiveness with thee, **that thou mayest be feared**.

Psalm 147:11 - The LORD taketh pleasure in them that **fear him**, in those that hope in his mercy.

Proverbs 23:17 - Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the **fear of the LORD** all the day long.

Isaiah 8:13 - Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your **fear**, and let him be your **dread**.

Isaiah 66:1-2 - Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and **trembleth at my word**.

Jeremiah 32:38-40 - And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may **fear me for ever**, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put **my fear in their hearts**, that they shall not depart from me.

Malachi 4:1-2 - For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that **fear my name** shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 10:28 - And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather **fear him** which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Luke 1:50 - And his mercy is on them that **fear him** from generation to generation.

Acts 9:31 - Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the **fear of the Lord**, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Acts 10:34-35 - Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that **feareth him**, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Acts 13:26 - Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you **feareth God**, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

II Corinthians 7:1 - Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness **in the fear of God**.

Philippians 2:12-13 - 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**. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Hebrews 4:1 - Let us therefore **fear**, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Hebrews 12:28,29 - Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and **godly fear**: For our God is a consuming fire.

I Peter 1:17 - And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in **fear**:

Revelation 14:6-7 - And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, **Fear God**, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Revelation 15:3-4 - And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not **fear thee**, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

Revelation 19:4,5 - And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice

came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that **fear him**, both small and great.

It should be quite apparent to the reader by now the importance of the fear of the Lord in the Word of God. The above list is by no means complete! We have just taken a sampling of verses to show that this theme is consistently found throughout the Bible. Those who would teach that we should not fear God today are foolishly ignorant of the plain teaching of the Holy Bible.

At this point, some might object, "But I thought Paul said God has not given us a spirit of fear". To biblically answer this objection, all you must do is check out the meaning of the word 'fear' in II Timothy 1:7. The 'fear' Paul was referring to in this verse was the word for cowardice, or timidity. It is not the same word "phobos" as we observed in many of the other passages.

Do you see the importance God's Word places upon the fear of the Lord? As we learned early in our study, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom, as well as the chief part of wisdom. It is also the conclusion of the whole matter, the duty of man.

Each reader is encouraged to go back through and read again the list of verses until you see that the fear of the Lord is essential to pleasing God. Without the fear of the Lord, there is no wisdom. As we have already seen, those who do not fear the Lord are called wicked, and they are separated from God's mercy. **Therefore, if you do not have a true fear of God in your life, you do not have Biblical Christianity.**

In our next study in this series, we will examine THE MEANING OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD. The third booklet is entitled THE NECESSITY OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD. We will also examine God's Word to find out how to obtain the fear of the Lord. The Bible makes it clear, there is only ONE way to obtain the fear of the Lord!

In closing, I ask every reader to seriously ponder the following questions. Do you give this much importance to the fear of the Lord in your life? Is this the message you are hearing preached in your church? Finally, Do YOU fear the Lord?" Without this fear of God, there is no knowledge of God and there is no Biblical Christianity.