***The Fear of the Lord, No. 2

RV79-02***

We are continuing our study of the throne room of God in Revelation 4:1-5.

**Seven Flaming Torches**

The seven flaming torches that we read about in Revelation 4:5 symbolize the ministries to the church age believer of God the Holy Spirit as it is described in Isaiah 11:2. We have seen that these seven torches include the torch of Jehovah, which is deity indwelling the individual Christian. The torch of wisdom is the provision of a divine viewpoint set of values. The torch of understanding is the capacity for spiritual discernment. The torch of counsel secures divine viewpoint advice. Then there is the torch of might, which is the divine power that raised Christ from the dead. This is the power available for the functioning of our daily lives and the executing of our ministries. There is the torch of knowledge, which is Bible doctrine information taught by the Spirit of God.

**The Fear of the Lord**

Then, in the last session, we began the torch of the fear of the Lord. This word, as we indicated in the Hebrew, connotes a dread of Jehovah because of His Holiness and His power. We may illustrate that by a verse from Psalm, the concept of the dread of Jehovah: "My flesh trembles for fear." And there is the word that we have here in the Hebrew – the "yiraw," the word for "fear." It is the duty of every human being to fear and, consequently, to obey the divine commandments of the Bible.

Respect for God's holiness and his power have many important consequences. It is easy to say, "Yes, I fear the Lord." It is something else for that really to be the case in your life. I am inclined to think that, if you were going to put these torches in order of importance (which would be hard to do), this one would be very nearly up at the top. If you will take the concordance and just look up this word "fear," and start following it through the Bible, you will be amazed how often it is used, and how consistently it is applied to the believer in a variety of ways. We're going to look at some of those in this session. You would be amazed at what tremendous results follow because a person is in dread of violating divine holiness. That quality alone, in the believer, puts him head-and-shoulders above the rest of humanity. So, we will look at some of the additional important consequences of this torch functioning in our lives.

**Consequences of the Fear of the Lord**

1. **Preservation from Doing Evil**

One of the consequences of the fear of the Lord is that it, obviously, keeps the person from doing that which is evil. This is demonstrated in Exodus 20:18-19: "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. And when the people saw it, they moved and stood afar off." They are standing at the foot of Sinai. Moses is receiving the law: "And they said unto Moses, 'Speak with us, and we will hear. But don't let God speak with us, lest we die.' And Moses said unto the people, 'Do not fear, for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that you do not sin.'"

Moses said, "This is an impressive sight. I can see why you are in a certain state of terror and dread. But you do not need to fear, because God is doing this for the specific purpose of alerting you to His power and to His majestic holiness so that you will take care not to sin. He is alerting you to the fact that it's serious business for you to sin, and therefore you should be in personal dread of doing that."

If you turn to Proverbs 16:6, this same concept is stressed: "By mercy and truth, iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil." The fear of the Lord will cause you to depart from doing evil. A great deal of evil, obviously, that you and I do, we do because we are not afraid of God. If we thought in terms of the first torch, the torch representing Jehovah, and the realization that that is the God who is present with us, and who indwells us every moment of the day, we would be a lot more careful about our readiness to do something that is sinful, because we would be aware of His presence, and if we had a fear of God's judgment, we would be a lot less inclined to go along with the evil.

Job 1:1 declares this: "There was a man in the Land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and shunned evil." There again is the concept of the fact that those who fear God are those who shun evil. The people in our society who do evil are those who are not afraid of God. In the experience of you and me as Christians, when we're willing to do evil, and we're willing to violate that moral code of principles that was given on Sinai and repeated in the New Testament, which struck such fear in the hearts of those Israelites as they saw that code being given, we who are willing to violate those principles do it because we're not afraid of God. Sooner or later, I can guarantee you, your life will experience the pain; the suffering; the shock; and, the consequences until you become afraid of God, and until you become fearful of contaminating; of crossing; and, of treating loosely His Holiness. You will learn to respect God one way or another.

Many times, when God begins to put the pressure on, we go not from our contempt (our lack of respect) to respect. Instead, we go to bitterness. We go to further resistance. We are so unafraid of God that we treat Him with contempt in another way. But sooner or later, our fear of God comes home to us. You can save yourself a lot of grief by getting a healthy respect for God's holiness, and acting accordingly in terms of what He has declared as the path of acceptable conduct with Him.

Psalm 34:11-15 tell us about this: "Come children. Hearken unto me. I will teach you the fear of the Lord." That's a good point. The fear of the Lord is something that you learn. This is what the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, in this respect, is all about. It is teaching us to fear the Lord: "What man is he who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good. Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." This passage indicates to us that God is aware of that which is evil conduct in us. Those of us who are going to learn the fear of the Lord are going to have to realize that, if we are going to avoid evil and its consequences, we must learn to fear and to respect God.

1. **The Basis of All Wisdom**

A second point is that the Bible tells us that the fear of the Lord is the basis of all wisdom. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to give us wisdom, and to give us divine viewpoint values. The fear of the Lord is the basis of securing that. In Psalm 111:10, we read, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that do His commandments. His praise endures forever." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If you're going to have a sense of values compatible with God's thinking, it begins with having a personal fear of God.

In Proverbs 15:33, we read, "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor comes humility." The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom. So, if you want wisdom, it is closely related to having a respect for God's holiness.

1. **Divine Viewpoint Knowledge**

The fear of God is the first principle of divine viewpoint knowledge. We have that famous verse declaring this in Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction." We have been studying the sixth torch, which is the torch of knowledge (Bible doctrine information). It is the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of knowledge. How is that? Well, it is the people who have captured a sense of respect for God's holiness, and their concern about violating that holiness, who are the people that then want to know how to avoid coming into conflict with divine holiness. They are the people who then turn to the knowledge of the Word of God. It is when you understand that the fear of the Lord is the highest duty of a human being, and that the knowledge or the Word of God is the basis of your being able to practice a fear of the Lord, that you will be driven to a study of Scripture. You will long for the righteousness that can be secured through the Word of God alone. You will become a fan of Bible doctrine, just like you're a fan of whatever else interests you in your life. So, the fear of God is the first principle of knowledge.

1. **Happiness and Prosperity**

The fear of the Lord is the source of personal happiness and prosperity. This is a very happy declaration, and a very happy truth to remember. Again, several places in the Bible indicate that the people who fear the Lord are those who are going to enjoy personal happiness and personal prosperity. Psalm 34:9 says, "O, fear of the Lord, you, His saints, for there is no lack to them that fear Him." That's an amazing statement.

Then in Psalm 112:1-3, this same principle is again enunciated: "Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man (that is, happy is the man) who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth. The generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house, and His righteousness endures forever." That's fantastic! "Wealth and riches shall be in his house." How many financial newsletter advisors do you know, who are in the business of helping people to get wealth and riches in their house, have told people that the first principle for getting wealthy is to fear God? Yet the Bible says that if you want to come into material possessions, step number one is to get a healthy respect for divine holiness, and a concern that you do not violate it.

Ecclesiastes 8:12-13 touch upon this same principle: "Though a sinner do evil 100 times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well for them who fear God, who fear before Him. But it shall not be well with the wicked. Neither shall he prolong his days, which are a shadow, because he does not fear before God." Personal prosperity is not given to the sinner, even though he may live a long time. Life never comes through for him. The person who does not fear God never gets it all together: "It shall not be well with the wicked."

Psalm 128:1-4 is another good reference on personal happiness and prosperity, structured upon the fear of the Lord: "Blessed is everyone that fears the Lord and walks in His ways, for you shall eat the labor of your own hands. You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house; your children like olive plants round about your table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord." Here the prosperity is given in terms of family life, and in terms of the provision of children. Those who fear the Lord find that part of that blessing is the provision of children, as that is part of God's overall plan in terms of the individual. That's not always the case for everyone, but that's why the Bible stresses that children are a gift from God. They're a special heritage from the Lord. They're not just something that happens.

We may also add Psalm 34:9: "O, fear the Lord, you, His saints, for there is no lack to them that fear Him. That is the same verse that we read a moment ago.

So, all these verses indicate to us that the fear of the Lord is the source of our personal happiness and of our personal material prosperity.

1. **Physical Life**

The fear of the Lord preserves one's physical life. Here is another issue. How many people who write in these health magazines (people who have advisements on good health) come along and say, "Now, the first thing that you should know is that the fear of the Lord will prolong your life. The fear of the Lord will provide you with physical well-being so that the days that God has accounted for you will not be cut short." No, instead, they say, "First of all, get vitamins. Be sure that they're natural vitamins. Get a good mixture. Get so much of this. Be sure you have vitamin E. Don't forget that vitamin C. Have vitamin C three times a day. You know you can't keep it." And on it goes with all of these elements, but I have yet to see somebody come up with the statement that the Scriptures make: that the fear of the Lord preserves our physical well-being.

In Deuteronomy 6:2, this principle is enunciated by Moses to the Israelites when he said, "So that you might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statues and His commandments which I command you, and your son, and your son's son all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." Moses said, "I'm giving you this information." The book of Deuteronomy was his final testament to the people of Israel before God took his life and took him home to heaven. One of the things Moses stressed to them was that their physical well-being, the prolonging of the days of their life, was directly related to their having a respect for God's holiness.

Proverbs 14:27 says, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." That's a great point of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is a life-giving source, and it enables us to escape the snares of death.

Proverbs 19:23: "The fear of the Lord tends to life, and he who has it shall abide satisfied. He shall not be visited with evil."

Proverbs 10:27: "The fear of the Lord prolongs days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." Now that puts it point blank. So, here's a very significant medical truth. Here is a very significant bit of health knowledge for physical well-being, that the fear of the Lord has a direct bearing on the prolonging of your life – on your life span.

Psalm 33:18-19: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine."

There are many ways that we could explore this. We don't want to get bogged down on that. But when you think about the concept of the fear of the Lord, and wonder how that is related to your physical well-being, and the prolonging of the days of your life, we can obviously see immediately that one of the most simple answers to that is that when you fear the Lord, you also keep His commandments. It was to these very people (to the Jewish people) that God said, "If you will keep My commandments (which if you fear Me, you will do), I will see that none of the diseases that the nations around about you suffer come upon you." Why would that be the case? Because part of those commandments gave them sanitary laws and dietary laws. They even gave them guidelines for maintaining health in a pre-scientific age. If they obeyed the commandments of God, they were going to escape certain diseases.

One of the most prevalent diseases that we have today is one that has recently come into prominence, and has exploded in the form of a sexual disease that all of you have been hearing about. That is herpes, a very serious and incurable disease that has again upon it the stamp of God's judgment for those who do not fear the Lord, and therefore are willing to be sexually promiscuous. God says that fearing the Lord will prevent you from engaging in that evil, and consequently, you will be protected from a very serious disease. I wish you could have seen the program recently on TV of people who have fallen into that trap, and who are describing what happens to them; what is happening to them; and, the complete disaster that this is in their lives, and there is no way out. They try to make the best of it. Everybody around them can be infected. Everybody around them, even those who do not have close physical contacts with them, can be infected. And babies almost never can be born without dying in the process, who have mothers that have this disease.

So, there is just one example. You can multiply that many times. The fear of the Lord means that you obey His rules. That's what being afraid of God means. You're afraid to cross Him. The consequence is blessing when you do that, and real freedom. So, take a lesson. Don't wait until it's too late, and you've gone to the point where you can't return, and you have to have the grief and the burden of the consequences brought down upon you, which you could have avoided with a little respect for God's Word.

1. **Divine Help**

The fear of the Lord provides access to divine help in time of need. The people who fear the Lord are the ones that God particularly delights to help. Psalm 145:19 says, "He will fulfill the desires of those who fear Him. He also will hear their cry and save them." Those who fear the Lord will find their desires fulfilled in our time of desperate need, and our cry to Him. Those who fear the Lord are under special divine care. Don't wait until you're in a bad pickle to say, "Now I'm going to start fearing the Lord." Make that your lifestyle now. Let this torch burn in your life, that the Spirit of God is seeking to mature and to develop to maturity, so that when you do come up against the crisis point, you can call upon a God who says, "You're one of My favorites because you have a healthy respect for My Holiness, and I'm going to particularly go out of My way to help you.

1. **God Takes Pleasure in Us**

The fear of the Lord is the mark of those in whom God takes pleasure. Psalm 147:11: "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him; in those who hope in His mercy." This is a rather related principal to the one we just looked at. God takes pleasure. He not only will help those who fear Him in a special way, when they come to a time of great need, but He takes particular pleasure in doing so for that kind of believer.

1. **Prevention of the Economic Abuse of Others**

The fear of the Lord prevents the economic abuse of others. There is a good point. How many times have the helpless been abused by those in positions of economic power? Those who fear the Lord will be careful not to do that. The people of Israel, in the principles of the explanation of the law, were warned against this sort of thing. You have an example of this in Leviticus 25:14-17, where Moses writes: "And if you sell anything unto your neighbor, or buy anything of your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another. According to the number of years after the Jubilee, you shall buy of your neighbor, and according to the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto you."

In Israel's economic system, under God's arrangement, every 50 years was a year of Jubilee. In the year of Jubilee, all personal debts were canceled, and all land that had been sold went back to the original family ownership. So, Moses is saying, "When you make deals with people now, relative to their land, you're going to be fair with them." If you're going to buy a piece of land that you know they can't get back for 20 more years, before the year Jubilee, then you pay them accordingly. But if you know that your Jubilee is 2 years from now, then you pay them according to that. That's fair. You pay them less, because that's how much fruit you'll get from the land, and then you're going to have to return it. So verse 16 says, "According to the multitude of years, you shall increase the price thereof; and, according to the futures of the years, you shall diminish the price of it, for according to the number of years of the fruits that they sell unto you, you shall not, therefore, oppress one another. But you shall fear your God, for I am the Lord your God."

The whole point of this is God saying, "You do not abuse people economically if you fear the Lord. This is an excellent passage on this subject. Look down at verse 35: "And if your brother has become poor, and cannot support himself among you, then you shall relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Take no interest or profit from him, but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. You shalt not give him your money upon interest, nor let him buy food supplies for profit. I am the Lord your God who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God. If your brother who dwells by you has become poor, and be sold unto you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave."

In those times, when a man could not fulfill his legal obligation to you, he sold himself into your servitude. But God says, "Don't you dare treat him like he was a slave. You treat him as an employee. He is an indentured servant. He has to serve you. But you give him a just wage for his services: "But as a hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with you, and shall serve you unto the year of Jubilee. Then shall he depart from you, both he and his children with him, and he shall return unto his own family. And unto the possession of his fathers shall he return, for they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt. They shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him with rigor, but shall fear your God."

So, the Scriptures make it very emphatic to the Jews that they are to remember from whence they came – that once they were strangers, and pilgrims, and sojourner in a foreign land, and they needed help. They needed a lot of help as they were coming out, and as they were crossing that wilderness. Some people helped them and some didn't. But when you're in desperate straits, and you're depending upon God, and you turn to someone for help, it is the fear of the Lord that enables that individual to keep his priorities and his sense of values. He reaches out, and he assists the poor.

It is Christians who must take that responsibility – first, within their own close circle, and then expanding from there, to treat those who are in an economically disadvantaged position in a way that is fair and that helps them. You act as somebody who has been prospered by God, and you act with fear with what He has given you.

We have seen people who have money. They have, therefore, a base of economic power and influence. I have seen how they act in public. I've seen these people come into a restaurant and abuse the waitress, because they are people who have money. They are people of influence.

When I was in seminary, one of the rather up-and-coming haberdasheries in Dallas was a place called Neiman Marcus. It was selling suits, and I went there and was buying one of their discount suits. It was probably the nicest suit I've ever owned. It was brown, and it had a fancy stitching, just like all the oil men have on their suits around the edges. It was a nice suit. While I was there, a man came in, and he had a problem with a button on a suit that he had bought. He said, "Now, I brought this thing in to have this fixed." I don't remember all the details, but he just created a scene like you wouldn't believe. He just stormed and fumed about the fact that they couldn't get this button fixed. He was just sick and tired of it. When he left, I overheard one of the salesmen ask another, "Is he really that important?" The salesman said, "No, he's just a small fish. He's putting on."

Now, that's how people who have economic power like to abuse those in a less-advantaged position like sales people, because they want to demonstrate that they're some kind of elitist people. God says, "If you have a fear of God's holiness (if you have a fear of the Lord), and you happen to have a little more money than somebody else has, you won't try to browbeat them with it. It is the person who has a fear of the Lord that knows how to be a wealthy person, and to act with graciousness in the process.

You might like to look up Nehemiah 5:1-9 sometime, which tell Nehemiah's indignation over the fact that he found that, while they're in the process of struggling in the communal activity of rebuilding the wall there in Jerusalem, here comes along a group of people who are in a position of financial advantage, and they're abusing the poor Jews among them. And he condemns this, and warns them that they who fear God must not be guilty of that.

1. **Trustworthiness**

People who do not fear God cannot be trusted. That is a good point to learn. People who do not fear the Lord cannot be trusted. Genesis 20:11 illustrates that. Abraham is faced with King Abimelech. Abraham is out of the land. He's in a situation where he has decided not to depend upon the Lord. He has a problem. Because his wife, Sarah, is a very beautiful lady, he has a concern as to what's going to happen when he comes into the area of authority of Abimelech, who practiced, as the ancient monarchs did, the custom of having a harem. And he did not ask a lady whether she would like to join his harem. He just appointed her to that role.

So, Abraham is concerned with the fact that Sarah is going to come along; Abimelech is going to see her; and, he's going to take her into his harem. Abraham said, "If I let him know that she's my wife, then he'll kill me in order to take her into the harem." So, Abraham lies to him, and he says, "She's my sister." This was only a half-lie because she was his half-sister. In the process, Abimelech, sure enough, decides that, "This is the girl I've been looking for all my life – number 403. Finally, she has arrived." And he proceeds to try to bring Sarah into the harem, and God speaks to Abimelech and says, "You better back off, buddy boy. You're walking on holy ground, and you're playing a dangerous game." Abimelech, of course, is shocked. He chews out Abraham for not telling him the truth, and for putting him into that position of great jeopardy.

So, Abimelech asks Abraham: "Why did you do such a thing?" So, in Genesis 20:11, Abraham says, "Because I thought surely the fear of God (the respect for divine holiness and the standards that that connotes) is not in this place. And they will slay me for my wife's sake."

While Abraham was wrong in the way he did this, and in not looking to the Lord for guidance in how to handle this matter, nevertheless, he does enunciate a very true point: When you are dealing with people who do not fear God, you cannot trust them. So, when you must associate with people (and that's most of the people you do associate with) who do not have a healthy fear of God, and who do not have a dread and a terror of coming into conflict with divine holiness, they are people that you must be very careful of in your dealings with them, because they cannot be trusted. They will do anything that they want to do, no matter how it violates the moral code of God, or any other principle that God has laid down.

1. **No Negative Volition**

Those who fear God do not turn away from Him in negative volition toward His Word. This is declared for us in Jeremiah 32:39. Those who fear God do not turn away from His Word with negative volition: "I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them. I will not turn away from doing good, but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." Jeremiah is looking down the corridors of time, and seeing what God is going to do for Israel someday. God is going to give them a new heart – a heart which will so fear the Lord (really fear God), so they will not violate His principles of righteousness. They will not be negative to the Word of God as has been their practice in the past.

1. **Government Leaders**

Those who govern men in the fear of the Lord rule with righteousness, and are a source of refreshments and blessings; that is, those who are civil authorities of one kind and another. In 2 Samuel 3:3-4, we read, "The God of Israel said, 'The rock of Israel spoke to me. He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after the rain." This is a splendid statement of truth. What Samuel is saying here is that those who are in political authority must be people (should be people) who fear the Lord. They should not even be elected to office in a country if they do not have a fear of the Lord. For those who have a fear of the Lord will rule with justice. They will rule with righteousness. The result of their administration, he says, is going to be like the refreshing dawn coming up with a clear sky, or like the tender grass which is springing forth out of the earth after a refreshing rain. He's saying that it's just going to be great to have a politician who fears the Lord in office. That is an experience that we rarely have today.

1. **Early New Testament Christians**

The early New Testament Christians were characterized by the spirit of the fear of the Lord. Acts 9:31 says, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied." The fear of the Lord characterized New Testament church congregations.

1. **The Power of God**

God is to be clear because He has power over one's physical life and eternal destiny both. This is illustrated in Luke 12:4-5: "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear. Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you: fear Him." Of course this does not refer to Satan. This is referring to God. He is saying, "Fear not the person who can just take your life, but rather you should fear the God who can not only take your life, but can also take your eternal life.

1. **Bible Doctrine**

The fear of the Lord is developed through the learning of Bible doctrine truth. Again, Moses pointed this out to the people of Israel in his final book to them. Deuteronomy 31:9: "And Moses wrote this law and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. Moses commanded them, saying, 'At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He shall choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together: men; women; children; and, your sojourner who is within your gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this Law. And that their children, who have not known anything, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land to which you go over the Jordan to possess it.'" The fear the Lord is developed through learning the Word of God. The more doctrine you know, the more you are in a position to actually have a healthy respect for the holiness of God.

1. **Idolatry**

The fear of the Lord will preserve a person's from idolatry. Joshua 24:14-15 declare this to us: "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth. And put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the river (that is, on the other side of the Euphrates, and in Egypt), and serve the Lord. If it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua is giving them a choice: "Those who say that they will not serve the Lord because he says, 'You do not fear the Lord," then the only option you have is to decide whether you want to serve the old pagan gods that were back in Ur of the Chaldees, or, if you want to serve the pagan gods here in the Canaan land. That's the only alternative you have. You guys can go ahead and choose which of the two sets of pagan gods you want to serve, but I'm here to tell you that as far as my family and I are concerned, we're going to serve the true and the living God who brought us here." It is the fear of the Lord that preserves from that kind of idolatry.

Please remember that the New Testament tells us that covetousness is an idol. So, don't be too quick to say, "Well, I don't have to worry about worshiping some dumb piece of wood or stone that's made into an image," because that's not the kind of primary idolatry that you and I are faced with. It is the idolatry of that brand new car you have, that you go around shining, and that you ask people not to lean against because you don't want any scratches on it, and that you carefully put to bed every night, and that you cover with a blanket. Then every three of four hours in the night, you get up and look out there and see how it's doing. That becomes your idol that you're bowing down to. Any number of things can become an idol. When you have a fear of the Lord, you don't fall into that trap.

1. **Military Conquest**

The fear of the Lord preserves a nation from military conquest. We certainly need to know that today. In 2 Kings 17:39, this principle is enunciated: "But the Lord your God, you shall fear, and He shall deliver you out of the hand of your enemies." Here's one of the principles of the Bible doctrine of warfare that God explained to the Israelites when they were conquering the land. That was that their fear of the Lord would cause them to make the kinds of decisions that would lead to military victory in the field of battle.

1. **Mercy**

The fear of the Lord secures infinite mercy from God for those who fall into sin. The Lord is well aware of the fact that you and I are not perfect creatures, and that we have every capacity and every possibility of falling into sin. One of the great statements of the Word of God is in Psalm 103:8 that calls our attention to those who move with a fear of the Lord. When they have fallen into sin, they again come under a special, sympathetic understanding mercy of God: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. (He is treating us in grace.) For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." Now that's good news. As high as the heavens are above the earth, that is how great is God's mercy toward the Christian who falls into sin – the Christian who fears Him, and who normally respects God, and who has a healthy appreciation for what it means to violate God's holiness, but who, in spite of that, falls into sin. That is something that we should remember.

We've all had experiences with people who are willful sinners. They're just hellbent to do what is evil. That's one kind of person. We have a certain kind of response to that kind of evil-doing. Then we've also had experiences with people who are in great personal agony of the tragedy of the sin, and that they're struggling with a sin that they hate, and the sin that they don't want any part of, and which, in one way or another, periodically overwhelms them. That is a different kind of person. That's the kind of person who is showing a respect for God, and for His holiness, and yet struggles with the problem of some sin. God says, "You're going to have my special sympathy and mercy." That's a clue as to how we should treat that kind of a person.

Verse 12: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities His children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them."

1. **Friendship**

Believers should seek close friendships only with those who fear the Lord. That is a variation again of that concept of associating with those who fear the Lord. Psalm 119:63 says, "I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts." I am a companion of all who fear You, and consequently, those who keep doctrinal principles. This tells us that you and I would be wise to make our close friends only from those that we are satisfied fear the Lord.

1. **Civil Authority**

Those who are placed in positions of civil authority are to be only those who fear the Lord. Exodus 18:21: "Moreover, you shall 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, and rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." Moses is getting advice from his father-in-law on how to set up a proper administration over the people of Israel in order to take the burden off himself.

1. **The Physically Challenged**

The fear of the Lord prevents a heartless abuse of the physically handicapped. Here is another thing that our society needs to be aware of: how should we treat people who are physically handicapped? In Leviticus 19:14, God says, "You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind. But you shall fear your God. I am the Lord." Those who fear the Lord will not abuse those who are physically handicapped, and who might, in the process, prove to be a nuisance to us in some way in.

1. **The Elderly**

The fear of the Lord also preserves a respect for the aged. In Leviticus 19:32, we read, "You shall rise up before the grayheaded, and honor the face of the old man, and fear your God. I am the Lord." You shall rise up before the person with white hair, and you will honor the face of the aged (of the old man). Why? Because you fear God. Please remember that the word "presbuteros", which is applied to the pastor-teacher, means "old man," which gives you a clue as to how you should treat him. Every time he passes, you stand to your feet. You nod. If you fear the Lord, that's the way you will act.

1. **Obey God's Commandments**

God's great desire for his children is that they would so fear Him that they would obey His commandments. This is the thing, above all else, that God wants from his children. Deuteronomy 5:29 teaches us that: "O, that there were such a 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 forever." God would like to bless we who are His children, and our fear of Him would enable us to keep His commandments to receive that blessing.

1. **Physical Illness**

Failure to fear the Lord leads to disobedience of His commandments, and then it results in the chastening of physical illness. It not only brings us to physical death, but first it brings us into the warning stage of physical illness. This was taught to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28:58, where the Lord says," If you will not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. Moreover, He will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt which you were afraid of, and they shall cling unto you. Also every sickness and every plague which is not written in the book of the Law, them the Lord will bring upon you, until you be destroyed."

The Lord says, "If you won't be afraid of me, and if you won't fear My Holiness and the consequent judgments when you violate My principles of Scripture, then you can expect physical debilitation. I will bring it upon you, and I'll make it a magnificent event.

So, to sum this all up, the Christian today has the Holy Spirit within himself to provide that believer with a reverential awe of God which results in the believer's enormous blessing; joy; prosperity; and, well-being in every way imaginable. It is a super thing to have a respectful, reverential awe of God – to be in fear of the Holy Creator, and of the fact that He keeps His Word in judgment as well as in blessing.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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