

Proverbs 22-09-28b

We're ready now to resume our study. We're looking at the fear of the Lord. It has been introduced in Proverbs.

We've seen it in chapter one, chapter two, and in chapter three. We have gone to Deuteronomy chapter 10 to see the detailed explanation of what the fear of the Lord is. And we've seen it in Deuteronomy 10, 12 and 13.

We've seen the context of this, the worthiness of God, because the heaven and the highest heavens belong to him and the earth with all that is in it. The Lord delighted only in your fathers to love them and he chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. We have surged past that privileged situation and condition because we are in Christ and he is the firstborn among many brethren.

And in the same way that his Melchizedekian high priesthood surpasses and transcends the Levitical priesthood, our status in Christ far exceeds what the Israelites enjoyed through their patriarchal covenant promises. Now they are going to catch up. God is just, God is fair.

And in the coming kingdom of the son, they are going to be given the opportunity that we currently have to enter into the fullness of service and function to God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, through the visible Christ, and the fulfillment of the kingdom promises in the kingdom of the son that will last for 10 centuries, followed by the kingdom of the father, where we all reach a new and permanent state where there truly is neither Jew nor Greek. The dispensations have unfolded. God has made his point.

He has demonstrated the independence of choice for both angels and human beings. And we will have equal opportunity in the kingdom of the father for citizenship in the new Jerusalem, for being a pillar in the temple of God, for sharing in those blessings that are detailed for overcomers in Revelation chapter two and chapter three that will begin for us during the kingdom of the son age, but will transition and pass into the kingdom of the father. So we, as the younger, end up getting there first.

God has used this theme of reversal over and over and over again. Ishmael was born first, but Isaac is the seed. Esau was born first, but Jacob is the seed.

Ephraim and Manasseh, you have that crossing of Jacob's hands so that the elder ends up serving the younger. Looking at Israel and the church, the church with the Gentiles is the hindmost part. And yet, because Israel has failed through unbelief, their branches were broken off from the olive tree and wild olive branches have been grafted in, but we only stand by faith.

And ultimately, the blessings and rewards that are unique to church age believers and

that are unique to age of Israel believers will merge into those permanent inheritance blessings that will be fulfilled in the kingdom of the father and the time, quote unquote, that begins then and heads forward into eternity, which is something we can only see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. So we have seen that the Lord your God is God of gods. This is verse 17 of Deuteronomy 10.

And Lord of lords. What is it that's written on Jesus' thigh in Revelation 19 when he comes riding the white horse to consummate the tribulation period at the battle of Armageddon? King of kings and Lord of lords. Here, the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords.

The great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and cannot be bought. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. There are people who want to impugn the character of God as he is presented in the Old Testament and therefore to reject Old Testament scripture because it doesn't fit their preconceptions.

They, I saw something just within the last 24 hours posted where they're sort of alluding to John 1, 18. No one has seen God at any time. It is the son who has revealed him.

And then in John 14, where Jesus is talking to Philip and to Thomas, and he says, if you've seen me, you've seen the father. And to limit God to only what is seen of Jesus in his first coming, ignoring his second coming, he first comes as the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He is gentle and unassuming.

His yoke is easy. His burden is light. He gives a call to those who are laboring and are heavy laden and calls them to rest.

And this is one role. It is one aspect. Here you have an aspect of God.

He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. This is absolutely true. The law of Moses was unique in the ancient Near East in paying so much attention to the widows, the orphans, the fatherless, the stranger in your midst and making provision for them and providing protection under the law, justice, even for those who were not descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But that is not all there is to God. You can see God in this verse and every word of it is absolutely true, but it is not the entirety of the truth. You can look at the Lord Jesus and see the father, but you have not seen the entirety of the father and it is trivially easy to demonstrate.

What did Jesus create? Ex nihilo, during his earthly ministry. And careful now, I specifically said ex nihilo. What something did Jesus create out of nothing? There is no example.

He brought life to bodies that had been alive and were dead. He brought healing to bodies that were diseased, blind from birth, crippled from birth. He created enough food to feed a multitude on two different occasions from some initial starting materials.

How did God create the heavens and the earth? Ex nihilo, out of nothing. If God creates something from nothing, but Jesus in his earthly ministry didn't create something from nothing, how is this a full expression of God? How much judgment did Jesus exercise during his ministry? And Jesus specifically says, I have come for judgment. How much did he exercise? Zero.

People have been identified by their response or reaction to the Lord Jesus. He came into his own and his own received him not. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

Jesus said, I have not come to bring peace, but a sword, and it's going to divide households and families. It will divide generations. Where do you see this happening during Jesus' earthly ministry? The results of that sword are yet future.

The outworking of that judgment is yet future, but there are those who want to limit their conception of God to only what they see during the days of Jesus' flesh in this life. And it is partial truth, just like what Satan served up to Eve. Hath God not said you may eat of every tree? Absolutely true, but only a partial truth.

There is an exception. Was Jesus gentle and humble in his first coming? Absolutely. Is that the whole truth of the Lord Jesus? Is he not coming back with king of kings and Lord of lords on his thigh? Is the blood not going to run as high as the horse's bridles? Is he not going to rule with a rod of iron, smashing in pieces like a potter's vessel those who resist and rebel? Is Jesus not going to separate the sheep from the goats? Is he not going to send the goats into eternal fire? Partial truth is dangerous.

Partial fear of the Lord is dangerous. Partial obedience. We'll see this shortly.

So verse 20. In verse 19, we had therefore loved the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Love the stranger.

Is this without exception and without discrimination? These strangers had to abide by the laws and statutes and ordinances in Israel, or they would be cast out in the same way that Israelites could be and were cast out and placed under the ban for disobedience. Anyone in Israel who made sacrifice to another God was to be put under the ban. And to be put under the ban was to be excluded from Israel.

And if you showed your face, you were to be stoned to death. It was capital punishment for worshiping another God. You have to think, well, what about Solomon? How many altars and temples did he build? What happened to the, well, what happened to Solomon? He began well, but he utterly failed.

And we've seen that particularly in the Song of the Shulamite. Verse 20, you shall fear the Lord, your God. The fear of the Lord, as detailed in these preceding verses, you shall fear the Lord, your God, you shall serve him.

And to him, you shall hold fast. This is consistency. This is durability.

This is faithfulness over time. And take oaths in his name. Why would God include this? Take oaths in his name.

What is it to take an oath? This is to make an earthly commitment, right? I promise if you loan me this, I will return it in the same condition you loaned it to me. I promise that for an agreed upon sum, I will work. I promise.

And my integrity is on the line. Why? Because I take this obligation as unto the Lord. You make your promises, you engage in transactions, you commit yourself in the eyes of the Lord.

Taking an oath in his name means I promise as God is my witness. And that is as good as it gets because there's nothing I value more than the Lord God in heaven. And if I promise before him, I will die before I will fail in this commitment.

Take oaths in his name. He is your praise and he is your God who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt with 70 persons and now the Lord your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude which was a promise God made to Abraham.

You have seen God fulfill his promises. Your faithfulness is predicated on God's faithfulness and God's faithfulness is often predicated on our faithfulness. The fear of the Lord.

Well, how does this work itself out? What is the result of taking on this commitment and making this priority, the fear of the Lord? We've already seen that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom in Proverbs 1.7. This is repeated several times in Proverbs as it's in Proverbs 9.10. Remember the structure of Proverbs 1-9 are the introduction and it's a cohesive argument that is made in those first nine chapters. Then you have presentation of the collections of wisdom. But the first nine chapters are a letter, a preface to young people.

Pay attention to this so that you know why I'm giving you these gems of wisdom, these treasures later on. And it is a carefully constructed, well-balanced, cohesive structure. So in Proverbs 9.10, what he said at the beginning in chapter one is repeated.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. You find this in Psalm 111.10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all those who do his commandments.

His praise endures forever. There is an element of eternality that is a part of the fear of the Lord. And this is the promise of eternal life.

Sometimes in a premonitory or anticipatory form. It's not clear. It's like I said earlier, sort of seen through a glass darkly.

The nature of eternal life. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and it teaches wisdom. Proverbs 15.33, the fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom.

And before honor is humility. Before honor is humility. I really love the part of the program for midshipmen at the Naval Academy where before you go out on cruises and stand officer watches on the bridge and shadow ensigns and Lieutenant JGs and such, your first cruise between your first and second year, you go out and you berth down with the enlisted sailors and you stand their watches and you do their jobs.

You swab decks and chip paint and maintain boilers. And you live the life of an enlisted man. Before honor, humility.

To make sure you know what it's like to be the people that you will one day have responsibility for. And this is a very interesting element in the fear of the Lord. And because we internalize these truths, it leads to lengthened life.

This is Proverbs 10.27. The fear of the Lord prolongs days. Officers who understand the nature of life on board ship for enlisted as well as commissioned are more careful in their policies, in their judgments, in their exercise of leadership. And they end up having a career instead of a short experience leading to failure and resignation or dismissal.

But in the spiritual realm, not only is the fear of the Lord the beginning of knowledge, but it lengthens life. And this at first blush is length of days such as was promised to Israel. The fear of the Lord that your days, remember honor your father and mother in the 10 commandments.

Why? That your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you. Fulfilling this command, this statute of God leads to length of days in this physical promise sense. But for us, what does it mean? Longevity in terms of spiritual life and service, which extends beyond this life into the kingdoms which are to come.

Service and function, opportunity, reflecting glory, being useful to the master. Length of days, internalizing wisdom and knowledge and exercising fear of the Lord, putting him first. Who do you think God is gonna look for in implementing the coming kingdoms? Well, let me find somebody that was kind of two or three times a week with their spiritual life.

That'll be a good one to rule and reign with Christ. Let me find somebody that was real faithful on Wednesdays and Sundays and let them sit with Christ on his throne. Really?

Who is the Lord gonna look to? Those who have demonstrated that in this life, God is everything.

Every day, every hour, every action, I am doing what I do heartily as unto the Lord. It is the fear of the Lord. This is the beginning of something that is going to continue.

Can you imagine if we can be faithful day by day now? Not be distracted, not be deflected, not be tripped up, not be turned aside into attitude sins, verbal sins, not fall into self-pity, not get spiraling into subjectivity, eyes on people, eyes on circumstances, eyes on things, succumbing to worry, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. That's the New Testament equivalent of loving the Lord, your God. The one who has my words and keeps them.

Remember in John 14, you have those two passages, 14, seven through nine. Go ahead and turn to John 14. I quote this often enough.

It's good to see it on the page. John 14, you remember one through six, let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God and you believe in me.

There's not an imperative there. Jesus states these as facts. I don't know why they translated the two verbs differently.

They're in exactly the same form. John 14, do not let your heart be troubled. You believe in God and you believe in me.

So why would your heart be troubled if your faith is in God and your faith is in me? One through six, look at verse seven. If you had known me, you would have known my father also. Notice, this is more than just, if you've seen me, you've seen the father.

If you've known me, you know the father. And from now on, you know him and have seen him. Philip says, Lord, show us the father and that'll be enough.

Jesus said, have I been with you so long and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the father. How can you say, show us the father? Skip down to verse 21. He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my father.

I will love him and manifest myself to him. Do you see the, John is so deep. When Jesus talks about, I am in the father and you are in me and I am in you, and you really have to take some time to reflect on that and figure out exactly what it means.

If we are in Christ, we are a new creation. If we are in Christ, we share so many of these blessings, that menorah of blessings in Ephesians chapter one that we've reviewed so many times. In him, we have.

In him, we are. In him, and so being in him, what does it mean that he is in us? We are

not just externally transformed. We're not just externally sanctified.

We are internally sanctified. We are internally touched by God. Instead of dying at the touch, dying at even a secondhand touch, this is our life.

Unlike Israel, unlike Sinai, when we come to the mountain, which cannot be touched, that burned with fire and smoke, remember it's talked about in the latter chapters of Hebrews, we have not come to Sinai. We have come to something far better. We are in him and God grants to us all of the blessings and opportunities and status that the Lord Jesus himself enjoys.

And we share in his inheritance. We share his priesthood. We share his chosenness.

We share his destiny. We share ruling and reigning with him. We share the pleasure that he gives to God the father.

We share in that. He in us fixes us where we are the most broken, which is inside. Sanctifies us where we are the most corrupt, right at the heart of the problem.

In me dwelleth no good thing unless Christ dwells in me. Christ in you, the hope of glory, Paul says. It's the same Paul that said, in me dwelleth no good thing.

But when Christ is in us, it's a completely different thing. So you look at verse 21. I will love him and manifest myself to him.

And then in verse 23, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words.

And the word which you hear is not mine, but the father's who sent me. Israel heard the words of Moses, the law of Moses, which wasn't the words of Moses. It was the word of God himself.

We have a better prophet than Moses. We have God himself in the person of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. How much more should we be invested in the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. The fear of the Lord lengthens life, Proverbs 10, 27. The fear of the Lord prolongs days.

And this is more than just a long happy life on this earth. It is primarily what our spiritual life is going to entail and include and eventuate in in the ages that are to come. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, Proverbs 14, verse 27, to turn one away from the snares of death.

There are so many snares of death. Eve hit the very first one, the serpent in the tree,

talking a great argument, making a great case. Well, it's desirable to make me wise, self-improvement.

Women's rights, equality, equality. Remember the watchwords of the French Revolution? The fear of the Lord leads to life, Proverbs 19, 23. And he who has it will abide in satisfaction.

He will not be visited with evil. Evil isn't gonna take up occupancy. Evil isn't going to control.

It isn't going to abide. It isn't going to characterize. The fear of the Lord is treasure, Isaiah 33, verse six.

Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times and the strength of salvation. The fear of the Lord is his treasure. It's Isaiah 33, six.

There is security in the fear of the Lord, Proverbs 14, 26. In the fear of the Lord, there is strong confidence and his children will have a place of refuge. See storms battering coastlands.

Everyone's looking for refuge. You think about the storms that will inevitably come, whether you build your house on the rock or on the sand. Jesus doesn't say a storm may come.

He says, the storms do come. What happens to your house? 14, 26 of Proverbs. In the fear of the Lord, you've got confidence and his children have a place of refuge.

Proverbs 15, 16. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure with trouble. Boy, if you haven't ever seen this up close and personal, there's nothing that will convince you of the truth of this than having close experience with those who are exceedingly well off and are utterly, utterly miserable.

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord. A little health, a little space, a little opportunity, a little sustenance, a little fellowship. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord.

God will multiply it like Jesus did with the loaves and fishes. Then to have a feast at a banquet table, you think about the guy they call Dives in Luke 16, Lazarus sitting out there at his gate. "'The man ate sumptuously every day,' Jesus says." How did he end up? "'Send the leper to put a drop of water on his finger "'and touch my tongue.'" Can you imagine? I want the leper to touch my tongue with his finger if there's one drop of water on it.

That's how miserable I am. This guy that fared sumptuously every day while the dogs are looking at old Lazarus. "'Better is a little with the fear of the Lord.'" We've seen how we find the fear of the Lord in the first five verses of the second chapter of Proverbs.

Inclining the ear, applying the heart, lifting up our voice, crying out, seeking it, searching for it. "It is findable. "Those who fear the Lord are blessed." Psalm 112, one.

"Praise the Lord. "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, "who delights greatly in his commandments." Not just lists them, not just checks off the box of whether or not he's followed them, but who delights greatly in his commandments. Psalm 128, one.

"Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord "and who walks in his ways." Psalm 128, four. "Behold, thus shall the man be blessed "who fears the Lord." That whole 128th Psalm is great. "To fear the Lord generates in us a hatred of evil." I can tell if a certain spice has been put in spaghetti sauce because I just hate it.

I can identify it at a distance. I can identify it in the smell of the sauce before it ever touches my palate. And if you're ever gonna make spaghetti, just check with Patty and she'll tell you what it is.

But it just ruins the sauce for me and I can detect it at a distance. If you hate evil, you can smell it. You may not know exactly how to define it.

You may not know what element of this policy or this speech or this statement or this action or this person's behavior. You just smell the evil. You have a sixth sense that makes evil so off-putting.

That's the promise of God in 813 of Proverbs. The fear of the Lord will keep you from evil. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride and arrogance in the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.

When you hear a perverse mouth speak, you will have a visceral reaction. When someone proposes something that smacks of pride and arrogance, you will viscerally react. It is a gift of God.

You have a truth detector and you have an evil detector. This comes with the fear of the Lord. God helps us with the fear of the Lord.

If we choose it, if we pursue it, if we seek it and search for it and find it, God helps us. He puts road signs. He illuminates the right path.

He makes that path straight so that we can see down it and make plans to keep to it and not stray to the right hand or to the left. He puts a voice behind us that says, walk this way. And he will detect for us the evil that is so deceptive and so pervasive.

Fear of the Lord will keep us from sinning. Moses said to the people, it's a funny thing. They're afraid of God.

And in 20, 20 of Exodus, Moses said to the people, do not fear. In the same place that he's gonna say, you need to fear the Lord. He's gonna say, do not fear the Lord.

Fear the Lord, but don't fear him. See him, but you can't look at him and live. This requires us to think.

Moses said to the people, Exodus 20, 20, do not fear for God has come to test you so that his fear may be before you. Do not be afraid. God has come to test you so that you will fear him.

Don't fear in the wrong way. Fear in the right way so that you may not sin. Abject fear, emotional fear, reactive fear is unthinking.

People hear a loud noise and startle and want to run away. You see a snake. You've got this fear that you can't control.

Genuine respect, genuine recognition of danger is thoughtful, knows what to do, engages in self-preservation, preservation of others, preservation of property. It has a response. It has training.

It has thinking. So Moses says, don't abjectly fear. Don't run away in terror.

God has come to test you. This is a great opportunity. You can pass this test so that his fear may be before you and you do not sin.

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. This is Psalm 19, verse nine. The fear of the Lord is clean.

It sanctifies us. If temptation or persuasion or enticement or allure is starting to drag us off the path the way Satan did Eve, it's desirable to make you wise. You'll know good and evil just like God does.

God's trying to hide something from you. There's a better thing. It's a temptation and an allure.

The fear of the Lord cleanses. It is clean and it keeps us clean. It sanctifies and it is sanctified.

Keeping it as frontlets before our eyes, tying it on our hand, what we perceive, what we decide to do cleans up our act, prevents us from making bad choices and wrong decisions. 19, nine of Psalms, it is clean. We will walk.

We will practice uprightness. Proverbs 14, two. He who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is perverse in his ways despises.

Do you notice how there doesn't seem to be a lot of gray area, especially in Proverbs? In Proverbs, if you fear the Lord, you walk in uprightness. If you don't, you're perverse in your ways. You're not kind of perverse.

You don't kind of fear the Lord. You're one or the other. It's very black and white.

It's very appealing to Marines and those who see things in clear terms. It's this or it's that. It's binary.

And that is sobering because if I can't look at myself if I can't look at my record over this day and yesterday and the day before and say, did my life, did my words, did my actions, did my treatment of others, did my engagement with the word of God and with the spirit of God reflect fear of the Lord or not? If I can't say I absolutely did my dead level best all day long to fulfill that Deuteronomy chapter 10 ideal. I thought about it all day long. I prayed about it all day long.

I anticipated it in the morning. I had a midday check and I reviewed it in the evening. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud.

Daniel, three times a day, why? The fear of the Lord is paramount. We need to anticipate it. We need to check it and we need to review it.

Any good plan. You look at all the disaster preparations they're making right now for the hurricane. They've got had a disaster plan in place.

Not the first time they've been hit by stormy weather. So they prepared for it in advance. They are monitoring how things are going right now.

Are people going where they're supposed to go and doing what they're supposed to do? Do we have supply stage? Do we have help stage? Do we have communications in place? They've got portable cell towers so that they can maintain cell phone communications. It's so important to have internet and cell if you can manage it. And after this is all done, they're gonna review it.

Any good plan, any effective execution of task involves preparation, performance, and review. You can't be in the military and not know this. You can't be in any well-structured organization and not practice this.

Teaching doesn't matter. You prepare, you present. How did it go? How can we do better next time? Well, what's more important than the fear of the Lord? What's more important? What have you got going on that's a bigger priority than this? You can't check it three times a day.

You can't think about it day by day. If we look at our track record and the fear of the Lord has not been our priority, it's binary. You do not fear the Lord.

Guess what promises do not apply? Guess what opportunities will not come? Guess what inheritance is forfeit? Guess what locations and visions you're not gonna have in the kingdoms to come? Guess what proximity to the Lord Jesus will not be enjoyed? Guess

what service and function will not be ours as a privilege? It's one or the other. There is, you know, it's like that Yoda guy. Do or do not, there is no try.

There's no kinda, I sorta, I somewhat, I occasionally. I more or less on average, God's got no time for that. Do, be, fear the Lord.

That's just the beginning. We don't care about it. What's our place in God's plan? Do you really want Him to treat us the way we treat Him? Do you really wanna be forgiven as you forgive others? Those are the promises of God.

So who are we? Why are we here? Well, there's so much more we can say about the fear of the Lord. There are over 200 passages in my notes describing the fear of the Lord, exhortations to fear the Lord. What happens when there is no fear of the Lord? What happens to those who do fear the Lord? The Bible is replete from Genesis to Revelation.

You would be hard-pressed to find a book, even in the mind of prophets, that does not harp on the fear of the Lord. Hundreds, hundreds of references. We have just dipped our toe in the water, but we're gonna move forward in Proverbs chapter three next time.

Hopefully we have at least a taste, a generalized understanding of why it is the theme of this collection of wisdom, why it is so important to take these exhortations to heart. It is life, it is health, it is everything. And without it, we are nothing, we have nothing, and we can look forward to nothing.

A lot on the line. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the very effective way that you have confronted us.

We hear the trumpet blowing at the top of the mountain. We have the words of the Old Testament. We have the words of the Lord Jesus.

We have the words of the apostles and the prophets. We have the examples in the historical record. We have the wisdom literature.

We have the poetic literature, all of which calls us to remember that you are our God. The Lord Jesus is our savior, and we are not our own. We have been bought with a very great and precious price, and it is our opportunity and our responsibility to honor you in everything that we do, everything we say, in every undertaking that we engage in.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that your Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts, help us to see clearly how we can improve, how we can be more faithful, more diligent, and have that wisdom that is the beginning of the fear of the Lord. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.