

Proverbs 22-10-26b

Let's pick up our study of the fear of the Lord. We have seen the five different kinds of fear in general, all of which can be associated with the Lord in scripture and also with other circumstances. But I'm interested in the practicalities.

It's always a possibility that we look at something in the abstract. Traditional Christianity has been lately accused of abstractifying the Lord Jesus and making him thin. There's a book called, *A Thicker Jesus*, where he needs to be, you know, that is not a title I would have chosen, but the idea being that appreciation of and love for and general presence and power of the Lord Jesus has become so abstract and so conceptualized that it doesn't have a real presence.

And there is a valid observation in there somewhere. But we always want to be careful that we don't come to church and look at abstractions and then go off and live the same life we've been living all along. If our time in receiving nourishment from the Word and receiving the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, both of these are supernatural.

The Word of God is living and powerful. God the Holy Spirit is a real genuine person, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. We have these two presences in our soul at a minimum.

If we have the Lord's words and keep them, we have an abiding presence, not only of the Holy Spirit, but of the Lord Jesus Christ and even of God the Father, which is a thing just almost hard to even enter into. But with all of that, we can ask ourselves the question, should I really be walking around looking like any old body? Am I indistinguishable? Is my camouflage so good that nobody knows I am related to God through Christ? I live my life on a higher plane with a different motivation. I'm not here just to go along and get along and find some gratification and eat, drink, and be merry because I'll be dead tomorrow.

There ought to be something different. If we are not different, we need to make a change because we are supernatural people and our, you wanna talk about minorities? Bible-believing, God-fearing, Christ-loving, faithful and obedient believers are a rare and endangered species. You and I like to think that we are those who fit that description, right? I ask myself the question all the time, do I look any different? Not only to the world, although it ought to be evident.

Somebody shouldn't be able to have an hour-long conversation with me and still not know that I'm a believer and that I know there is a God in heaven and He's in charge of things and I'm not worried because I have a hope. And that gives somebody the opportunity to ask me about that hope, should they so desire. But if you can have an hour-long conversation with somebody in whatever context and they don't know you're a believer, something's wrong.

Something is wrong if we don't look different than denizens of the world and citizens of the kingdoms of Satan. Really? We're indistinguishable? Our thinking doesn't come out in our conversation? We blend? That's a bad sign. That is a bad sign.

So our motivation ought to be evident and certainly evident to God. Let your moderation in life be known to all. That's the horizontal observation.

The Lord is near. That's the vertical observation. By this shall all men know you are my disciples, that you're not a criminal.

By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you obey the speed limit. Not what it says. It is our love.

Carefully directed, informed, understood. What are the conditions for the expression of God's love? There is a base level of provision that is generally made in a general and universal sense. The rain falls on the just and the unjust, but God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

Grace is not universally dispensed. The love of God has been expressed through Christ, but it doesn't enter into individual blessing until the conditions are met. The one who loves me, Jesus said, is the one who keeps my words.

That's the one to whom I and the Father will come. So this is intrinsic to fear of the Lord. As we look a little further at this, we don't want it to just end up being a concept.

Oh, the fear of the Lord, I know what that is. I'll go to Deuteronomy 10. And this study ought to give us fresh fuel on our spiritual fire to look at what we're doing.

How am I spending my time? How am I talking? How am I thinking? Awareness is the beginning of progress. You can't fix a problem if you don't acknowledge it, if you push it aside, you don't think about it, you pretend it's not there, you get distracted, you get deflected, you turn on your browser and all of this clickbait stuff and people pushing this, that, and the other. There was a fresh news report this past week about how Google is actively suppressing search results in favor of one party's political candidates in state after state after state.

If you try to get balanced information, if you wanna do some background research, you gotta wade down to page 123 of your results because Google has, and this is known, they have admitted it, it's been proven, there's been analysis done that the table is being actively tipped by big tech. They, algorithms are obedient to those who write them and in many cases express the political and philosophical predilections of those writers when it comes to filtering information and accusations are being made that elections are being influenced and stolen and the people making those accusations are the very people who are influencing and therefore stealing elections. At the state level as well as the federal level, this is just a symptom of the evil that is around us.

Well, you can stick your head down into that stinky trash barrel and let all of that stuff seep into your mind and into your thinking, you can get frustrated, you can start talking and expressing opinions and getting into conversations and arguments with people who don't believe it and all the rest of it, guess what? You have just become a casualty of the spiritual conflict. We are not here to straighten people out on politics. We're not here to fix the economy, to fix the government, to fix who's getting elected and how the court rules and all the rest of it.

That's not why we're here. And those who think we are are increasingly dominating Christian conversation even as they bad mouth traditional Christianity with observations that are a partial truth. There are problems in fundamentalism, there are problems in traditionalism, there are problems in legalism, there have been abuses and oppressions, there are plenty of paces.

I'll give you a classic example of how this works and then I'm gonna move back to the fear of the Lord. Let's say you're a person who thinks the January 6th protest in Washington DC was just the most heinous, dangerous and unconscionable thing that's ever happened. And you think it's symbolic of the failures of Christianity, that it's white evangelical Trumpism.

So you riffle through photographs that were taken on that day until you find one protester or maybe two or three out of the thousands that were there. This person has a T-shirt that's maybe got a Bible on it and they're waving an American flag and the picture I saw most recently, they're wearing a pair of gloves that have skeleton bones printed on their black gloves, makes your hands look like a skeleton. And so you take this person who is evidently a supporter of Mr. Trump, who is evidently a Christian and who evidently loves America and who evidently has something about bony gloves and you post this picture and you say, Trump evangelicalism, this is what's wrong with the country and you understand the logical fallacy here.

You know, the fallacy of division and the fallacy of composition. In one, you take a single element and its characteristics and you expand that to everything. I always, I give you the same example.

The muffler on my car is hot, therefore the entire car is hot. Or my car is red, therefore my muffler is red. You can't argue from the general to the specific and claim that everything that is true of the whole must be true of each individual part, nor can you take the characteristics of one individual part and expand it to describe or condemn the whole.

Does Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, have flaky, virtually insane followers? Have people in the name of Jesus sawed the arms off their infant children? Do you really want to characterize all of Christianity based on what somebody who claims to be a part of it or to adhere to it or believe it, that is a logical fallacy. It does not follow that because a

flaky person likes something, that something must be bad because the person that likes it is bad. It's utterly irrational.

But in the postmodern age, irrationality flies because it fits my story. Truth in the minds of a great number of people today is defined by what fits my narrative. I have told myself a story.

I believe this story. So everything that comports with my story is true and anything that doesn't fit into my narrative is not true. Logic, evidence, fact doesn't have anything to do with it.

I like it because it fits my story. So as we observed before class tonight, in the case of hurricane damage, and you have eight out of 10 people who are filing for aid doing so fraudulently, many of them not even property owners, but they are asking the government to send them a quick check because they're in dire straits. Well, the reason I'm typing this to you on my phone from my car is my property was wiped out.

I can't, I don't have my paperwork. I can't prove that I own the property. I can't prove where it is.

I'm just a person on the phone and I really need thousands of dollars in federal assistance right now. What is this person thinking? There are a few of them that are probably nefarious mustache tweakers, but a lot of them say the government has money and I don't. Any means by which I can get the government to give me money is morally right.

I have no moral compunctions. I don't find it wrong. I don't find it reprehensible.

I don't think of myself as despicable that I would defraud and cheat taxpayers out of their money for my own benefit. It fits my story. I'm needy.

I have a lack. They have a surplus. Oh, government's got plenty of money.

They're not gonna miss a few grand that they send to me. So I'll say whatever I have to say, do whatever I have to do as long as I don't get caught. And people have no moral compunctions at all.

What does the Bible say about this? In the latter days, men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money. They are gonna act with a conscience that has been seared with a hot iron. Conscience doesn't enter into it.

It doesn't function. This is everywhere. Why am I belaboring this point? Because it is easy to focus on this.

It is easy to be discouraged by it, to be disgusted by it, to want to take up arms against that particular sea of troubles, and by opposing, try to end it. However, that is not the

fear of the Lord. Awareness is good.

Observing the signs of the times, recognizing that many of the descriptions of the last days are finding a fulfillment as never before in the history of the human race. From Cain and Abel to the present, there has never been a global ubiquitous sauce of evil in which everything is marinating. You cannot escape it.

You can't reach out without hitting it. You can't read or listen to anything without coming in contact with it. It is everywhere, everywhere.

That's never been true. There have been pockets. You can talk about historical egregious examples.

It has never been everywhere like the old line from Life in the Fast Lane, everything all the time. It is comparable only to what the Bible describes in the days preceding the flood, where God looked down and saw the wicked imaginations of the heart were only evil all day long. And he said, I've got to put a stop to this.

I believe we're in a similar situation today, but that's good news. Lift up your eyes, your redemption draweth nigh. And what this ought to do, instead of creating in us a fear of circumstance, fear of the future, what about my kids? Many of us have the next generation that we love and we think what kind of world are they and their kids going to live in? Listen, listen to the word of God.

Let not your heart be troubled. The fear of the Lord should replace and push outside the boundaries any other fear. I can't do anything about the ubiquitous presence of evil at every level, in every area, art, music, literature, media of any kind.

It's shot through with it. Everything is infected. It reminds you of one of these post-apocalyptic nuclear holocaust movies where somebody released a virus or there's radiation everywhere and nothing is safe.

You know, it's just knuckle dragon walking dead if there's anything, it's just dismal. We are to turn our eyes on Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him, endured a system and a nation and a people that were shot through with the same kind of self-righteous, self-gratifying, power-hungry evil. He called it out, but he didn't obsess on it.

What was the Lord Jesus obsessed with? If you had to pick one thing that Jesus thought about all the time, what would it be? I must be about my father's business. I and my father are one. Looking at me, you see the father because I am all about the father.

That should be us. We are his body. I'm not all about worry.

I'm not all about fear. I'm not all about constant disgust and disappointment. I'm not ranting.

I'm not shaking my fist at the television or the computer screen or my phone, which has started proactively sending me things I didn't even ask for. I want to be all about the father. By the way, just this is another, I'm gonna give you the occasional excursus just to get things off my chest so that they don't just fester up there.

You've heard me address in the past the idea of the Christ-centered life. How can anybody argue against it? It's the Christ-centered, how can you not be focused on Christ? Okay. Like Bible study, it is a good thing as long as that's not where you end, and it is a self-correcting error because we are not to be living a Christ-centered life.

I know that sounds shocking. Somebody outside the fold would call me a heretic and burn me in effigy, but you do not find that in scripture. Do we appreciate the Lord Jesus Christ? Does this take anything away from anything we have ever learned and appreciated about the Lord Jesus? Not at all.

But the Lord Jesus didn't say focus on me, center on me. What did he say? I am the way to the father. I am the truth of the father.

I give you the life that comes from the father. So I saw somebody defending the Christ-centered idea, and they said, if you look at chapters, Paul was all about the Christ-centered life, such as Colossians chapter one. In Colossians chapter one, Paul mentions Jesus 26 times, I think was the number.

And I thought, really? Well, if I'm mistaken here, and Paul is all about the Christ-centered life, maybe I better go back and learn something. So I went to Colossians chapter one, and just for fun, I counted all of the times that Paul refers to God the father. Well, it's the same number.

It's depending on whether you use the pronouns or not, and I didn't go back to see how they arrived at their 26. But when it talks about God and the father, his glory, his plan, his purpose, his son, his love, it's in the mid-20s as well. The father is mentioned pretty much to the same degree as the son, if you wanna go by statistics, which again is a logical fallacy.

But the father is shot through Colossians chapter one, and he's shot through Ephesians chapter one, and other places that people go to say, oh, it's all about the Christ-centered life. You need the Jesus hermeneutic, and you need to soak yourself in the first advent of Jesus and do everything he did in his first advent. That's the kingdom of God.

No, it's not. If that was the kingdom, why does Jesus constantly talk about it in the future tense? They will inherit the kingdom of God. The meek shall inherit the earth.

They haven't already inherited it. Theirs will be the kingdom of heaven. Theirs is not already the kingdom of heaven.

There's always the already, not yet. But that's my little aside. We are distracted into a partial truth.

Is the Lord Jesus central and important and our example that we should follow in his steps? We represent him as his body. We are filled with his spirit. We are soaked in his truth and in his word.

Absolutely. But if you stop there with that truth, and don't balance it and extend it and compliment it with the importance of God the Father, it's a partial truth. And partial truth is dangerous.

Dathan and Abiram heard Moses say, you are all priests. So they decided to bring strange fire before the Lord. And fire came out from the altar and incinerated them.

And they had to be carried away by the corners of their garments because they believed, espoused, and practiced a partial truth. And I'll tell you a worse one. If you do decide to inform yourself about the current progressive Christianity movement and the Jesus hermeneutic and the kingdom love and all the rest of it, do this.

If you want to start counting references to members of the Trinity, read Keith Giles. Read these other authors. I can give you a list if you wanna look in that direction.

I don't really recommend it. I have to because I am the watchman on the wall. And I can just tell you, the enemy's out there.

Be sure you get your weapons. You don't have to look at it like I do. But if you do, what you will find is a virtually complete absence of any reference to the Holy Spirit.

Never talk about the Holy Spirit. Because of that, there is no talk of repentance. When they talk about forgiveness, they're talking about entirely us forgiving other people and just overlooking.

And don't worry about if they're repentant, if they're sorrowful, if they wanna do something different, just forgive them anyway. Just forgive them. It's a blanket forgiveness.

You wait till we get to Jesus on the cross and Matthew. And I've got something to show you about that. But absence of the Holy Spirit.

Partial truth is dangerous. This is why we look at context. This is why we search the scriptures.

This is why when we look at the fear of the Lord, we don't restrict ourselves to Proverbs. We go back to the law. We go forward to the New Testament.

We look at the prophets. We look at the entire witness of scripture. Do not be deceived.

How many times does Jesus, how many times does Paul say, let no man deceive you. Be not deceived. Be not deceived.

The only way to not be deceived is don't settle for partial truth. Don't settle for half truths. Well, this is an expression of the fear of the Lord.

What do we know about the fear of the Lord? Well, let's talk about what it is not. This is a real interesting exercise. What happens when there is no fear of the Lord? You remember Abraham decided there was no fear of the Lord in Gerar, Abimelech is king.

And he says, Sarah is my sister. We talked about that recently. I thought, surely there's no fear of God in this place.

So they will kill me because of my wife. What is that? What kind of fear? There's no anticipation that if you attack somebody who is a Yahweh worshiper, bad things might happen. They don't have an emotional or an intellectual anticipation of bad behavior.

It isn't, there's no worship of God or there's no respect and obedience and faith. It's, they don't care about any consequences. They don't think my God is real.

That's what Abraham thought. You can find this in Deuteronomy 25, 18. Again, Deuteronomy, second giving Moses is reviewing and rehearsing much of the history in Israel.

And in 25, he says, Amalek is anathema in Israel, why? Remember 25, 18 of Deuteronomy, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary, attacking the weak and the defenseless, cheap shots, cheesy, and he did not fear God. The same type of lack of fear that Abraham thought was not to be found in Gerar is a characteristic of Amalek. Here's an interesting one.

In second Kings chapter 17, verse 25, second Kings 17. If you remember the geography of first and second Kings, you know that the Northern kingdom has fallen to the Assyrians, Judah still exists, but the King of Assyria is doing replacement theory. You know what replacement theory is in the modern day, right? People think, well, there's one side of the philosophical political spectrum who wants to overwhelm their opponents by getting a bunch of additional voters.

And so they're letting them all swarm across the border, assuming that they'll vote their way. And so it's replacement. We're gonna replace Americans with people who will vote our way, and they don't even have to be Americans.

We're gonna let them vote. Did you hear that they're trying to get this in place where anybody that's been here 30 days can vote. Doesn't matter about citizenship or anything else.

Don't have to have any ID. If you can just prove you've been here 30 days, you can vote, really. And yet you deny people who claim you're trying to shift the balance by getting more votes from people who come here illegally.

Interesting. Second Kings 17, 25. So if you go to this context, the King of Assyria has taken a bunch of people off captive and he has sent other people into the land to replace them.

So when you get to say verse 24, the King of Assyria brought captives from Babylon, Kuthah, Avah, Hamath, and Sefer Vahim, settled them in the cities of Samaria to replace the Israelites. This is what the King of Assyria did. Took out the Israelites, replaced them with foreigners from a bunch of different places, settled them in Samaria.

The settlers took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. Now look at verse 25. When they first lived there, the settlers did not fear the Lord.

So he, the Lord, sent lions among them and they killed a few of them. They didn't fear the Lord. They had come to the Lord's land and the Lord said, fine, if you worship me, you can live in my land.

My people have gone out. They didn't worship me. That's why they had to leave.

If you come here, you probably ought to think about worshipping me. Well, they didn't. There was no fear of the Lord.

So God sent lions among them and killed a few of them. As a result, it goes back to the King of Assyria. And he says, well, obviously the God, look at this.

The pagan, atheistic, godless, perverted, corrupt King of Assyria figures out that if these lions are killing people in the land, it's probably the God of the land that's unhappy and he needs to be appeased. This is like the King of Nineveh saying, 40 days, we're gonna be destroyed. Dress everybody in sackcloth.

Maybe if you repent, he'll relent. And they've got more sensitivity. Godless people have more sensitivity to the need to fear the Lord than God's own people.

It's just tragic. The King of Assyria says, send a priest down there and teach the people the traditions of the God of the land so that he'll stop killing him with lions. So the King of Assyria, verse 27, issued the order.

Take one of the priests whom you carried away. Let him go back and live there. Let him teach them the law of the God of the land.

The kings of Israel didn't do this, but the King of Assyria does it. What a slap in the face. What a beat down, what a rebuke to the people of Israel.

The King of Assyria has got more sense than you do. He knows enough to not fail to fear the God whose land this is, who gave it as a gift, as a part of covenant to Israel. King of Assyria has got more figured out than the Israelites themselves.

So that is no fear of the Lord. Jeremiah chapter five, verse 24. You read the context here in Jeremiah chapter five.

Jeremiah is told to roam back and forth through the streets of Jerusalem, look and investigate, search through the squares, see if you find anyone, even one person there doing justice and seeking truth, and I will forgive them. This is a better deal than Abraham got from God in anticipation of the destruction of the five cities. If there are 10 righteous, I won't destroy.

God tells Jeremiah, see if you can find one, and I won't destroy them. Find me one person. What does the Lord require of you, oh man? But to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly.

See if you can find one person doing justice and seeking truth, I will forgive them. Although they say as surely as the Lord lives, still they are swearing falsely. This is that number five kind of fear of the Lord.

There's this superficial shell of fear of the Lord, but it's not heartfelt. They say, as the Lord lives, they're supposedly swearing in my name. As the Lord lives, I'll be there tomorrow.

As the Lord lives, I'll pay you for this grain, but they're swearing falsely. Oh Lord, do not your eyes look for truth. You have seen their faithless heart and have stricken them, but they did not weaken.

You have consumed them, but they refuse to take correction or instruction. They have made their faces harder than rock. They have refused to repent and return to you.

Then I said, surely these are only the poor, the uneducated. They are foolish and have no spiritual understanding. They do not know the way of the Lord.

They do not know the ordinance of their God. They don't know the requirements of his just and righteous law. Let me go to the great leaders and speak to them.

They know the Lord's way. The hoi polloi, it's not their fault. They're being badly led.

Let me go to the leaders. But they all together have broken the yoke and torn off the restraints. Therefore, a lion from the forest will strike them down.

A wolf from an arid plain will ravage them. A leopard that keeps watch over their cities. Anyone who leaves will be torn to pieces because their rebellious acts are many, their unfaithful deeds numerous.

Why should I forgive you? Your sons have forsaken me. You have sworn by those who are not gods. When I gave them enough food to satisfy them, they committed adultery and marched to the prostitute's house, et cetera.

No fear of God before their eyes. This is the problem. And when you get down to verse 24 of that chapter, what do you see? Because the king of, I'm sorry, this is in 524.

They do not say to themselves, let us fear the Lord, our God, who gives the rain both early and late in its season, who guarantees to us the fixed weeks of the harvest. They haven't said to themselves. Remember in Proverbs where it says they do not choose the fear of the Lord.

This is something we choose. And if we do not choose it, it's on us. And the hope of blessing and opportunity of reward, future service, reflecting God's glory turns into a fearful expectation of judgment.

As it says in Hebrews, what is their problem? Why can you not find a single faithful or obedient person anywhere in the city? Because they do not say in their hearts, let us now fear the Lord, our God. It's a choice. We can set this as a priority and be blessed, be strengthened in the inner man, be given insight and understanding.

It is the beginning of wisdom. It is the beginning of knowledge. It is the way to the straight path that God lights.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. It is the power to avoid and purge sin. We say, ah, sin, it's like the poor.

You have it with you always. No. If you're operating in human strength, sin is always gonna be a problem.

Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. The word operating in our heart, if it is incorporated into the fear of the Lord, the fear of the Lord departs from evil. It doesn't tolerate it.

It doesn't countenance it. It doesn't practice it. It doesn't fool itself into a superficial fear of the Lord while it is practicing behind the scenes.

It is departing from evil. The fear of the Lord departs from evil. We can disassociate ourselves from the evil that is going on around us in the world to include those who are trying to fight fire with fire, who are getting down in the mud with those who are evil and wrestling with them in the mud and using the same tactics, acting in the same way, using personal ad hominem attack, acting despicably because your cause is right.

This is like people shooting abortion doctors. Really? You think because you're right, you can do no wrong? We can do a lot of wrong in the name of right, in the way that

Christians have perpetrated a lot of evil in the name of Christ. We have to examine ourselves and we have to operate.

The fear of the Lord will insulate us. It will ensure against those kinds of errors. Anybody that commits evil in the name of the Lord doesn't actually fear the Lord or they would know better.

We don't wanna make that mistake. Well, we have much more to say about the fear of the Lord and we'll pick it up next time. Once we have this in hand, once we have fully got a handle at least on what the fear of the Lord is, Proverbs is going to fall in place and the gears of this book are going to spin like a well-oiled machine.

And the structure and the beauty of these sayings and these pieces of wisdom, as you piece them into the fear of the Lord is just unparalleled in the Old Testament. It's amazing. It's a beautiful tapestry of truth, interwoven with many threads that appear and disappear.

But the big picture, when you step back and look at what it depicts and what it communicates, it is the fear of the Lord. The book of Proverbs is all about it. Looking at these parallel passages will give us the sensitivity and the context to fit those pieces into this beautiful picture.

So we'll continue to look at it next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit, the power of your word to transform us by the renewing of our minds, to give us the power that the Lord Jesus acquired over sin and over death in his victory on the cross, to cleanse ourselves, to separate ourselves from sin and from evil, to live a life that is pleasing in your sight, that reflects a healthy and godly fear, that qualifies us for service both now and in the kingdoms to come, and reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you and we praise you, and we commit all of these things to your faithful hands in Jesus' name, amen.