

Proverbs 22-11-02b

We pick up our study now looking at the fear of the Lord specifically, how do I get it? I want to have the fear of the Lord. I am convinced of its importance. I am convinced of the woven tapestry of scripture that features this thread from Genesis to Revelation.

How do I get it? Well, we have seen that, of course, naturally, almost without thinking, we recognize that the instruction that provides to us knowledge that we then convert to wisdom through application, through the expression of faith. I need my faith to convert knowledge to wisdom. Now, what does this really mean? We can talk about faith and knowledge and wisdom and this till the cows come home.

What does it mean in practical terms? What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. What time I am frustrated, what time I am disappointed, what time I am challenged, what time I am enduring suffering, what time I am opposed by people and even policies. And world events oppress me, the presence of evil in the community or in the nation or in the world oppresses my spirit.

It's depressing to see that there is no fear of God in the land when it comes to so many issues and so many potential opportunities for people to appreciate God. It gets squashed, it gets driven out of the room by anger and shouting and opposing and hostile views. We'll have more to say about this here in a few minutes, but if you haven't already deduced where our how-to is going with regard to the fear of the Lord, think about your triad of Christian virtues.

The fear of the Lord is founded on wisdom and knowledge, which is the realm of faith. Faith converts knowledge to wisdom. It's not just what I know, but what I do with that.

Humility, humility before honor, Proverbs 15.33 related to the fear of the Lord, this is love. Love is the measure of my humility. We had a good thought during the break.

We've often thought of humility as teachability. If I am teachable, it means I can embrace a new thought. I can occasionally change my mind.

Closely associated with humility is the ability to repent, to acknowledge that I was wrong, I acted wrongly, I spoke wrongly, I was thinking wrongly, I treated someone else wrongly, and to go to God with that recognition is repentance as a facet of and reflection of humility. Non-humble people don't repent. Nothing wrong with me, that was the other guy's fault.

We've spent many hours talking about the dangers of trusting that little compass in our head or in our heart that tells us we're right. You can't trust that thing, it's magnetic, and there are a lot of influences that can throw it off. We need an external reference.

We need something like the stars that are fixed and put in place by God instead of a

magnetic needle that was made in a factory and is subject to influences that are close at hand. So objective outside reference, and when I see from that measure, when I am told from that knowledge that I have been wrong, I have acted in self-centeredness, I have acted in a sinful way instead of in a loving way, repentance is in order, but I cannot repent if I am not humble. And if I detect in myself fewer and fewer occasions where I need to repent or decide that, I really think I did that wrong, danger, Will Robertson, warning.

If we seriously think we can go several days and we just really haven't done anything wrong, you're looking at the magnetic needle and not at the stars. Look at political discourse. We're coming up to the midterm elections.

Look at the heated rhetoric, the accusations, the ad hominem, and everybody thinks they're right. There is not a person you're listening to that wakes up deciding, you know, I know this is all a bunch of nonsense, but I'm gonna perpetrate it anyway. Everybody is equally convinced they are right in their heart of hearts.

They've got rationalizations, they've got support, they've got all kinds of narratives and examples and anecdotes and quips and one-liners and soundbites to push across their rightness. They're genuinely, in virtually all cases, unless they're running a nefarious, you know, deception scheme, but most people running for office genuinely think their plan is best, their values are best, their goals are best, their priorities are best. If you just do it my way, it's gonna be roses and paradise and nirvana all rolled into one.

They're convinced. If we could just measure which person really felt the rightest, would that tell us the right? No. Well, what's true of them is true of me.

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man and it leads to death. You can't trust the rightness meter. Throw that thing out.

You can feel right and you are as wrong as wrong can be. Look at the people with whom you disagree politically and ask yourself, are they right because they feel right? Well, without the grace of God, there go I. I can feel convinced I'm right and I am as dead wrong as I can be. And I mean dead wrong.

That's what scripture says. Wrongness that leads to death. Can't trust that thing.

Ignore it. Go to the eternal reference. Go to the knowledge that can become wisdom when we aim our faith at it.

Scripture and the standards of scripture, the measure of scripture. Read 1 John. If you wanna know what love is, read 1 John and then look in the mirror.

Look in the perfect law of liberty as a mirror. Use that as the measure and then we'll know. This is the function of faith.

This is the function of love. Why should I bother to put myself through it? I'm more comfortable believing that I am right. I am self-satisfied.

I can pursue gratification. I can justify the things that I really kinda wanna do in my corrupt heart of hearts. Why would I pursue and seek out and do the hard work necessary? And it is work.

It's not an automatic thing. I used to believe if I just get doctrine into my soul, it will transform me. That's partly true.

I cannot be transformed without it. The word of God is alive and powerful. It is the sharp sword.

It is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. But I can't just hear it and siphon it inside my head or my heart and expect it to convert. What's lacking there? What happened to the people that heard everything God said, heard the rumblings on Mount Sinai, saw the tablets of stone Moses brought down, drank the water made from the powdered golden calf and all the rest of it, ate the manna on a daily basis, saw the pillar of cloud, saw the pillar of fire, plenty of information, plenty of awareness.

Did they enter the promised land? Even Moses himself didn't make it. Only Caleb and Joshua. Why? Just quoted it in the first session.

The promises of God, the word of God, was not mixed with faith. They had the presence and the power and the manifestation and the word of God all over the place. It did not convert them unless it was mixed with faith.

And only Caleb and Joshua did that. They're the only ones that went in. So faith is what converts instruction and knowledge into wisdom.

Love is the measure of whether or not I have humility. If I am unrepentant about my own failures and my own sins, I will not have a pure heart. I cannot pray the prayers in Psalm 51.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. If I don't feel the need for that, I'm not gonna pray that prayer. Why would I not feel the need? No humility.

Therefore, no love. There's no love without humility. There is no love without repentance.

There is pseudo love. There's the love as the world loves. Well, the enablement, the empowerment, and the hope that drives this whole pursuit of the fear of the Lord is centered on and in the Holy Spirit.

Turn to Isaiah chapter 11. Isaiah chapter 11. This is what I like to call the Old Testament part of Isaiah.

Chapter one through chapter 40. 39 actually, one through 39. Look at chapter 11.

There shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse. All right, we can stop right there. Who are we talking about? The root shoot from the stump of Jesse.

Who is it? This is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the incarnation. This is the first advent.

The son of God made flesh dwelling among us. We behold his glory, right? We know who we're talking about. So the root shoot, the rod from the stem or the stump of Jesse, a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The Netzer, the Nazarene. What is the first thing that is said about him in verse two? The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The spirit of wisdom and understanding.

Hey, this sounds familiar. The spirit is going to turn his knowledge and instruction into wisdom and understanding. The spirit of counsel and might.

Counsel, good advice, good policy. Picking the best way forward, choosing amongst the options. Finding out what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Counsel and might, the enablement to carry these things to fruition. The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. The spirit enables, empowers, and produces the fear of the Lord, even in the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the Messiah himself.

This spirit energizes and brings to pass all of these components. Look at the next verse. What does he delight in? What makes him happy? What makes him feel fulfilled and gratified? Gives him a sense of accomplishment.

That's what it means to delight in a thing. It's fulfilling, it's gratifying, it's pleasant. You look upon it with delight.

His delight is in the fear of the Lord. And what does that fear of the Lord enable? He does not judge by the sight of his eyes, and he doesn't decide by the hearing of his ear. What a liberation, what a freedom.

I don't have to get the right news channel on my TV. I don't have to get the right source on my browser or my phone to get the information to do right, to choose right, to think right, to vote for right. Why? Why? I'm not depending on the sight of my eyes or the hearing of my ears.

You know, the Lord Jesus Christ is our example. He test drove the spirit-filled life, enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit in his humanity for everything that he did, especially including his miracles. We don't have to judge, trying to dig and dig and dig

and inform ourselves about every issue, although for issues of importance, it's certainly worthy to try to be informed.

I'm not saying, you know, fly blind, but we don't depend upon it ultimately. We can do the best we can to get a reasonable amount of information, and then we pray. We look for guidance.

We look for insight. We look for a scriptural point of view, a biblical worldview, a Christ-like understanding. Conditioned by the plan and purpose of God the Father.

That's how we choose. That's how we make our choices and our decisions. With righteousness, he shall judge the poor.

Do you notice that the poor need to be judged? It doesn't say he will vindicate the poor or he will bless the poor. He will judge the poor because some of them are worthy of help and others are not. Some of them are poor, not just in material goods, but in spirit.

They've got to be judged. Just had a guy accost me while I was tuning a piano in a church, and the guy who let me in had to leave to run an errand and left the front door open, and a homeless man came in and was hitting me up for money. I told him, what you should do, sir, is come back.

I'm just the piano tuner. This is a church, and there are people here who would love to visit with you and come to an understanding of your situation and give you the help that you need. Because the help that he needs is not 40 bucks cash.

Lord only knows what he would do with it as soon as he turned the corner. Judge the poor. If you're not in a position to judge, then send them to someone who can take the time to become informed and give them the help they need, which is not always the help they want or the help they ask for, but offer them the help they need.

They need a spiritual connection. They need someone to work with them if they've got problems to determine the nature, scope, cause, and potential solution of those problems. Handing somebody 40 bucks is generally enablement.

You've got to be wise as serpents, even as you're harmless as a dove. So judge the poor. He decides with equity for the meek of the earth.

You wanna talk equity? There's decision to be made. There's judgment to be exercised before equity can be pursued. There's a lot you could say about this, just like 1 Corinthians 13, but in the interest of disciplining our study to focus on the fear of the Lord, I just want to note that this spirit presence, this spirit ministry to the Lord Jesus himself and to those who are his body and follow in his steps and look to his example, this is what the Holy Spirit does.

And the fear of the Lord is mentioned twice. Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight is in the fear of the Lord.

It's right there in the middle of these functions and these attributes. Fear of the Lord. Can't do it without the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit never leaves us. We are sealed. We are indwelt.

We are gifted. These things don't come and go. What part of the Spirit's ministry can come and go? His filling.

We're never commanded to be indwelt by the Spirit. We're never commanded to be gifted by the Spirit. We're never commanded to be sealed with the Spirit.

What are we commanded to do? Be filled. That's dependent on me. So once again, how do we get this fear of the Lord? I want it.

I want it bad. I want my picture in the theological spiritual dictionary next to fear of the Lord. There's Sam.

You want to see somebody that embodies, exhibits, practices, and experiences the fear of the Lord with all of its concomitant fruitfulness, opportunities, service, reflection of the glory of God. I want that. I want it bad.

How do I do it? Wisdom and knowledge. All right, and not just that. I've got to convert it with my faith.

I've got to apply it, put it into practice, make it happen. I can do that. God gives us faith, gives us the ability to exercise faith.

He doesn't put an impossible goal before us. I can do that. I will trust His promise.

Though He slay me, I will trust Him. I'm not letting go of that. I choose to believe.

This comes up sometimes when you hit these powerful arguments for atheism or evolution, or why is there no evidence of God? These little creepy, crawly, devil-inspired thoughts nibble at the back of your mind. Am I really deluding myself? Am I just a mystical? Could I have been some other religion if I'd been born and brought up into it and came to believe it as a child? Am I just fooling myself? Anybody can make a case for what they choose to believe, and they do. I choose to believe.

Even when I don't feel like believing, even when I'm not sure I can deduce a whole bunch of evidence for it, and I can't prop myself up with a big foundation of logic and experience and example and so on, in the times of the temptation to doubt, doubting is fine. Everybody can question. The Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane questioned His Father about the impending course of events.

Nothing wrong with questions. Questions provide an opportunity to choose. If I don't have a satisfactory answer, what do I choose? Do I choose to trust? Do I choose to put myself in the hands of a faithful creator? Like the song says, there's a lot of things I may not know, but I know whom I have believed.

I am persuaded that He's able to keep what I've committed to Him. I'm persuaded, and I choose to believe. Throw your nonsense at me all you want.

I choose to believe. This is really why we are here. God is looking not just for people who've got the mental horsepower to parse evidence and choose the more probable outcome or the more probable option, God is looking for those who, being aware of His existence and His self-revelation in nature and in Scripture, choose to place their faith in Him.

This is what spreads the field. To what extent do we do that? How far will we go in doing that when the chips are down, when we're struggling, when we're tested, when we're challenged, when the way is dark and drear? Remember, that's the time for that godly fear. See, I just made a little rhyme.

But seriously, it isn't can you convince me to go a certain way, what do I choose? That's faith, that is hope, and that is love. I choose the way that results in love, that is measured by love. When everything else has been wrapped up and put into the annals of history, the other gifts, Paul says, at the end of 1 Corinthians 13, three things will remain, faith, hope, and love.

But what is the greatest? Love. Show me a better avenue to self-sacrificial, beneficial to others, love. Show me a better way.

Paul says, I'll show you a better way, 1 Corinthians 13. I show you a better way. That's the title of that chapter, last verse of the previous.

I'll show you a better way. It is the best way, and it is the only way. Nobody has ever found a way for the human heart to embrace and express genuine love than God's spirit and God's divine power in our souls.

So how do we get this fear of the Lord? Need the instruction. I need to develop that attitude of humility that is measured by love. And I got to ask myself the hard questions.

I've got to examine myself. There is very little self-examination going on in these days. Don't like what I see? I just won't look.

You know, it's avoidance. Well, it's cowardly. Have some courage.

Because with the looking and with the observing and with the understanding of our failures comes the way of escape. The test that causes me to analyze myself also reveals

to me the needed solution and how effective it is going to be for me. So wisdom and instruction, humility as measured in love, the Holy Spirit.

Now, what do I know about how active the Holy Spirit can be? I know He's always with me, but how do I know whether or not He is filling me? How can I maintain and pursue and cultivate the filling of the Spirit? Well, what's the quickest way to have Him leave the building? Lack of humility, unconfessed sin. Humility leads to confession. Humility leads to self-examination.

Something's wrong here. It could well be me. I need to check this out and get this leaven purged out of the house.

My soul ought to be the temple where only unleavened bread is permitted. There's any leaven, purge it out. Find it, throw it out.

Got to identify it to make it leave. Need divine power to make it leave. I can't overcome my sins, my patterned sins, my evil predilections.

I can't overcome that in human strength. It will get me every time. Need divine power.

I need to cultivate the presence of the Holy Spirit by eliminating sin, patterned sin especially. It's the known enemy. You see it coming.

I've been here before. I know your face. Why would I unlatch the bolt and let you in? But we do.

We got to quit it. We need divine power to do it. And it's a choice.

I choose whether or not to be humble. I choose whether or not to confess, to ask myself the hard questions. It's much better to judge ourselves than to wait to be judged.

So the Holy Spirit, turn with me to Acts chapter nine. I've already seen 11.2 of Isaiah. Now we're going to Acts chapter nine.

Acts chapter nine. This is Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Very familiar story.

Philip in verse 30, hears him reading the prophet Isaiah and says, do you understand what you are reading? He said, how can I unless someone guides me? How can I understand the scriptures without a guide? The Holy Spirit puts Philip there to speak the truth in love and change this man's life. In this age, God the Holy Spirit is our guide. If I want to do that repentance and confession thing to eradicate sin and keep a house clean and swept in which God the Holy Spirit will be comfortable so that God the Son will be comfortable so that God the Father will be comfortable, what do I have to do? I've got to identify the leaven and purge it out.

I need to identify sin and stop it. What is the function of the Holy Spirit that the Lord

Jesus declared in the upper room? The scene we're looking at on Sunday mornings. When the Holy Spirit comes, what three things will he do? He has a ministry of convincing, of convicting, of demonstrating, what's the first one? Sin.

How do I know if there's sin in the camp? How do I know if Achan has taken some loot and hidden it in his tent? There are going to be symptoms. When there is sin in the camp, spiritual victory fails. Israel couldn't win a battle while there was sin in the camp.

I'm not going to have peace. I'm not going to have patience. I'm not going to have any of the fruit of the spirit when there is sin in my camp.

God is not going to accept my spiritual sacrifices in the spiritual temple that I am a part of and that I represent if there is defiling presence at the altar. If I'm trying to bring that sacrifice in an unworthy manner, not qualified, not sanctified, not cleansed. Can you imagine what would happen to a Levitical priest who didn't bother to conform to the ordinances of sanctification and tried to bring a sacrifice? There were some that tried it.

Remember Korah, Dathan, and Abiram coming before the Lord with strange fire? What happened to them? Well, carried out like burnt toast. We have to pay attention to sin. This progressive Christianity, Reconstruction, and the rest of it, the two things they ignore the most are the Holy Spirit and sin.

They don't talk about sin and they don't talk about the Holy Spirit. You can't get anywhere. You can't get to the second letter of the alphabet without the Holy Spirit.

And the first thing the Holy Spirit's gonna do is convict of sin. What's the second area of his persuasion? Righteousness. Same thing in Hebrews, chapter six.

If you change your mind away from dead works, if you purge out the sin and stop practicing works of death, you gotta replace that with something. Replace it with what? Righteousness. How do I get that? The Word and the Spirit.

Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, Paul says. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. He not only tells us what to throw out, he also creates in us righteousness.

We are sanctified, we are cleansed, and we are enabled to produce positive fruit. Jesus said, abide in me, my word abides in you, you will bear fruit. That abiding is energized by the Holy Spirit.

Do you seriously think we can abide in Christ without the Spirit? It's the reason he sent the Spirit. That's how we abide. So, paying attention.

So, in practical terms now, if I know the Word of God is important to my practice and expression of fearing the Lord, what do I need to do? Should I go a whole half a day and

never even think about anything I know from the Word of God? Not call to mind a biblical principle that applies? Hear somebody talk? See something happen? Not put it into a spiritual perspective? Not relate it to who I am and why I am here? Is this an opportunity God has put in my path? Is there something I should do? Somebody has turned their car over in the ditch. Should I stop and help? I'm on my way to an appointment I'm supposed to keep. I gave my word I would be there.

Well, now I've got a quandary. Do I stop and help somebody in need or do I go keep an appointment that could have dire consequences if I miss it? Well, I could try to parse that in human terms or I could go to who I am and why I'm here in Christ. And depending on the circumstances and the details, depending on the results of my prayer and my asking God, asking for the Holy Spirit to impress on my mind the truth that pertains in this moment for this quick decision I have to make, I put it in spiritual terms.

I've got to practice the presence of God in my life through his word and through his spirit. This is how the Lord Jesus and God the Father become an active and meaningful presence in my life is the word and the spirit. I can't ignore either one.

I need to consciously bring the word of God that I know out of the treasury and into my thinking. I need to look to and cultivate the presence of the spirit. What's the first and great thing you think of when you think of the Holy Spirit riding around with you all the time? Tell you the first thing that comes to my mind, what if I need to pray? Who conveys the prayers? It's the Holy Spirit.

I have the privilege of talking directly to the throne because of the Holy Spirit. Am I aware of that? Is that my first thought? Here's a problem. Let's pray.

Here's a problem. Let's take it to the throne. Lord, give me insight.

Give me understanding. Give me grace. Give me patience.

Give me the ability to do what you would have done by somebody who represents the Lord Jesus Christ right here, right now. That's got to be our thinking. That is the fear of the Lord with shoes on in this world.

That's what it is. So I think about the word. I think about the spirit.

I think about faith in that word. I think about mixing my faith with the promises of God. I think about the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, eating that spiritual food, drinking that spiritual drink.

That spiritual rock that followed them was Christ. We have access to him in unprecedented terms. That is the fear of the Lord, being aware all the time.

Time that I spend not in that awareness, what's it good for? What is its value to the

future? What does it represent in terms of my hope? We've talked about faith. We've talked about love. What is the expectation of time spent either in or out of practicing the fear of the Lord? It's all the difference in the world.

You've either redeemed the time or you haven't. You've either invested it for treasure in heaven and opportunity in heaven and the glory of God and vindication of the work of Christ on our behalf, or we've frittered it away. Substitute your own word for fritter.

What are we doing with our time? It is capital. Redeem the time. Left to themselves, the days are evil.

By default, if we do nothing, if we think nothing, if we don't act, if we don't become conscious, if we're not driving daily into the center of the fear of the Lord, the day will be evil, and my participation in it is going to produce and sponsor evil. There is, you look at the black and white nature of scripture. There's not, I kind of fear the Lord.

I'm sort of filled with the Spirit. I'm somewhat, oh no. You're either humble or you're proud.

You're either in or you're out. You're either filled with the Spirit or you're filled with yourself. We're either producing divine fruit or it's wood, hay stubble, thorns, and briars on the well-watered field.

It doesn't say, you know, there was some wheat in this field, but there was, you know, there was a thorn patch over here and a couple of rocks over here and the crows eating the seed over here. Jesus characterizes the field as all fruitful or all rocky, all thorns and briars, choking out the word, rendering it unfruitful. The whole field is that way.

We would like to fool ourselves. We want to take an average. We want to say, well, more or less.

Scripture doesn't do that. Find me a scripture that says, well, it can be kind of good and that's okay. It's not that way.

That's us talking. That's that magnetic needle in my soul saying, yeah, it's pretty close to north. Go ahead and shoot.

You're within a few feet of the target. Go ahead and pull the trigger. Ignore the bystanders that are behind that are going to get hit in the fallout.

Can't do it. So back to Proverbs 2, one through five. You've got to make it a priority.

It's got to be central. Receive it. Apply ourselves to it.

Lift up our voice for it. Search for it like treasure. All of those verbs, we've seen them so many times, but that's the essence.

This is the how-to. You say, okay, I want to seek it as silver and search for it as treasure. What can I do? Start with, let me think back.

What was the main point even out of last Sunday's worship in the Word? What were we talking about Wednesday night? Can I think back a few weeks? Maybe I've got a note here. Let me grab my Bible. Just take five minutes.

Get that percolating in my soul again. Wisdom, knowledge, instruction. What have I been doing here the last hour or two? What's my attitude? What have I said? What am I doing? Where's the Spirit? How actively is the Holy Spirit filling me and enabling and empowering and guiding me? I'm the Ethiopian eunuch.

I've got the Word, but I can't understand it without a guide. I can't use it. I can't make decisions from it.

What'd the Ethiopian eunuch decide once Philip explained it? Well, here is water. What prevents me being baptized? I'm ready to make a change in my entire life. New religion for me, new faith for me, a savior for me.

Once he's guided in the Word, he's ready to be a different man as we should be. It's the Word and the Spirit as ever. We've been given the tools and the result of working those together is the fear of the Lord.

That's how we do it. Everything we're gonna see in Proverbs depends on it. And we've got a good handle now, I think, on how to do it.

So let's do it. Father, thank you for the truth of your Word. Thank you for the presence and power of your Spirit.

Thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, his example in showing us the power of those two provisions in a human life to achieve and perform and accomplish the highest and greatest purposes in your plan, entering us into fellowship and relationship with you. We pray that as we reflect on what we've seen tonight from your Word, that your Holy Spirit will make it active and meaningful and powerful to chop out what should not be in our life and in our soul and to reveal those things that will more fully conform us to the example and the record of human life of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we will be qualified to represent him in this life and to accompany him and serve with him in the next. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.