

Introduction

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[0 : 00] I've got a quote on the screen there for you this morning as I begin. If Jesus in his humanity delighted in the fear of God, surely we need to give serious thought to cultivating this attitude in our lives.

That's a quote taken once again from the book of Isaiah, chapter 11, verses 1 through 3. The passage that tells us something of the coming of this Deliverer, this one Jesus Christ. And it says, There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his root shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. Now the great good that God is working in the lives of those who love him, those who are the called according to his purpose, is to conform them, us, to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.

The greatest good that could happen to any individual in the world today, or time past, is that they would be delivered out of darkness, out of bondage to sin, under the person of Jesus Christ, united to him, and God starting this process, this practical outworking of conforming them to the likeness of his Son, Jesus Christ.

[1 : 41] So at times, we read in Scripture passages that encourage us, encourage us to pursue that same purpose. It's kind of like, let's get on the same page that God is on in this great work of sanctification in our lives.

And so we read some of these passages like Philippians 2.4. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. So addressing a whole group of people, the church, in Philippi, the need for them to be able to enjoy this union that they have, not just as individuals, but as a group, as a church.

And in order to do that, they need to be having this mind of Christ. And so the encouragement goes to them. And then Romans 13.14, But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. Paul has just rehearsed the whole list of ungodly practices, indeed, that they were saved out of.

And now, the outworking of that new life that they have in Christ Jesus is for them to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Dress yourselves inwardly in the things that you think, the attitudes that you cultivate, but also in your outer actions, your words and your actions, those that would be characteristic of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 12] And then 1 Peter 2.21, For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in His steps.

So there will be those times of suffering that we go through. And yet, our shepherd has gone before us and has been the suffering shepherd for us and has set an example for us to follow.

So, as we anticipate sufferings, difficulties, trials to come in our lives, we're not going to be surprised at those, but we're going to look at the good shepherd and see the example that He has set for us and we're going to put on the Lord Jesus Christ when it comes to how we endure and pass through those trials and those difficulties.

And then 1 Corinthians 11.1, the Apostle Paul, he made that his ambition to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and encouraged those that he was writing to in the church of Corinth there to also, well, follow my example, but follow my example as I follow the example of Jesus Christ.

So on and on, we could go with these other Scripture passages so that we're on that same page that God is on and conforming us into the image of Jesus Christ.

[4 : 36] So, Jerry Bridges, who wrote the book that we'll be working through, is correct when he writes that quote, if Jesus in His humanity delighted in the fear of God, well, surely, we need to give

serious thought to cultivating this attitude in our lives and that's what we want to do in the weeks ahead in our time together that we have here on Sunday mornings to really make it our prayer and desire to cultivate and nurture the attitude of delighting in the fear of God or as Jerry Bridges has titled his book, *The Joy of Fearing God*.

We don't usually associate fear and joy. We like to avoid anything that brings fear into our lives thinking that it's going to infringe upon our happiness and joyfulness moving through the day. So avoid it. Don't become involved with it at all. But in the Scripture, we see something very different when we're considering the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 28, 14 says, Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall in calamity.

So we see this great contrast. Those who know God in truth now can enter into this relationship of fearing Him and can also enjoy a life of blessing.

[6 : 17] It might be somewhat confusing to a person who's not yet in right relationship with God or even to someone who might be early on in their new life in Christ.

How can that be possible? I'm used to understanding fear in a very different way. And now you're telling me that the fear of the Lord can be associated actually with blessing in my life.

This is something I must explore and become more familiar with. Nehemiah was very familiar with that. Interesting prayer of his in the first chapter of Nehemiah as he's heard of the great calamity in Jerusalem, the condition of the city.

He sets forth this prayer to his God. He says, O Lord, let you be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name.

And there it is again. Faced with some great challenges in life even ahead of him and yet still having that blessing of delight in the fear of the Lord.

[7 : 28] So it will be good for us to really give some attention to this topic of joy of fearing God and consider, well, what is the fear of the Lord first? And what is true of God that nurtures this fear of him in us?

And then lastly, what does our response look like to this God who has revealed himself to us? I'm not going to accomplish all that in one week or two weeks.

That's the whole series we're going to be going through and looking at those different topics. And I'll have the first two weeks and Jeremy will come alongside with a couple weeks and back and forth will go until we're fully nurtured in the fear of the Lord.

Or at least I trust we've grown in the fear of the Lord. And not just grown in the fear of the Lord but grown in delighting in the fear of the Lord.

Understanding what that is but then also experiencing that as we move through life as well. So this week and next week I want to take some time to provide something of a definition of the fear of God and how joy and the fear of the Lord are connected and I say something of a definition because Jerry Bridges in his book says that the fear of God is better described than defined.

[9 : 01] He goes on to write that his whole book is an attempt to describe the biblical concept of the fear of God and its outworking in our lives so humbling me again thinking he'd take the whole book to do it I'm not going to take one or two weeks to do it but it's going to be something that we unfold week after week after week and as we cry out to God for help in understanding this great privilege that we have in delighting in the fear of the Lord that he would be the one who truly does nurture us in this fear of the Lord but let me at least begin by providing something of a definition of the fear of God and I think if I was to open it up and ask you many of you would come up with this two word definition of the fear of God reverential awe of God and to some extent we really have lost the power of this word awe it's been used to describe some

I'll say less than awesome things maybe a movie that we've seen or what's popular today is to take a picture of your food at the restaurant oh I had this most awesome meal at wherever or maybe since so much sports is on TV it's a great run that a player oh did you see that awesome run or whatever of that sports figure well not really truly awesome in the sense of what the word really means we can come closer to the meaning of the word when we experience maybe a display of power and creation like a tornado a storm at sea I can remember my father talking about when he was on a troop carrier over to Australia during World War II and as they were crossing the ocean in a storm the ship would go down into a trough of a wave and the other ship he wouldn't even be able to see because it disappeared as they went down into that trough makes me sick even thinking

about it but indeed you know sensing and experiencing something of the power of that in a storm at sea or a hurricane friends of ours had a house down in Florida and that was somewhat damaged from the recent hurricane indicating 140 mile an hour winds you know we get up to 35 and 40 around here and I think it is everything tied down but the power of that or powerful blast of thunder or lightning and on and on we could go but it's something that we're exposed to that displays a power an ability that far surpasses that which is normal and produces in us a sense of dread and fear lowliness vulnerability when we're exposed to that well now let's put the word reverential with that we add that word because our exposure to that which is truly awesome has created in us a recognition of its superiority its transcendence and has moved us to thoughts and actions of great reverence and honor and respect you know

I like to look at the lightning in a storm and have been known to step outside and to really experience a little bit more until there's a boom you know big clap and then I step back into the house why do I do that because I recognize I'm vulnerable compared to such power that goes beyond anything that I would normally experience during the day well the displays of power in creation are not volitional acts of power by impersonal nature remember what we see in creation is a display of the power of God Psalm 135 5-7 for I know that the Lord is great and that our Lord is above all gods whatever the Lord pleases he does in heaven and on earth in the seas and the deeps he it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses so creation is really the venue through which God puts on display his power and his wisdom when I speak of having a reverential awe of God I'm indicating that God has revealed himself to me or to a person through his works his word and the reality of his true character has been impressed upon the person by indeed the work of the Holy Spirit that the person responds in fear trembling reverential awe humble submission dependence delight worship you know I'm using so many different words because as we move through life and are connected with the reality who God is there's different expressions that are called for the fear of the Lord brings forth many different expressions from me and in my life and so one of those indeed is delighting in the fear of the

Lord well let's go on a little bit further and explore how does one come to that initial fear of the Lord because we understand that even in my own life there was a time I had no fear of the Lord and we know many people today and many some here this morning who really have no fear of the Lord how does one come to that initial fear of the Lord well it does have to start with God revealing himself to the individual the individual coming in contact with the reality of who God is and we'll see in our studies some of that truth of God in weeks to come in our chapters where a true fear of God is really only based on the revelation of him and how he exists in truth as God and God has done this in creation Romans 1 19 for what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them for his invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made so they're without excuse so we are exposed to this revelation of God on a daily basis the sun comes up we said we enjoy the sun the sun did not come up on itself oh I think I'll get up today and provide some light for those people in

[16 : 39] Bremen and they can enjoy their day the sun gave no thought to that it was the hand of God bringing the sun up he holds all those things in his power psalm 19 1-6 the heavens they declare the glory of God the sky above proclaims his handiwork day to day pours out speech night to night reveals knowledge their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world so even though the sun didn't directly speak to you as I'm speaking to you it was sending forth a message this morning and some of you connected with that message oh isn't the sun beautiful you know we recognize the truth of what what we were receiving from the sun and the existence of the sun but there was a greater message that the sun was communicating to us that while I am powerful and give you light there is one greater than me who has given me the power and has brought me up this morning that is the one you need to see and hear the heavens declare the glory of God but God's revelation went further and we can give thanks for that because creation itself was really not enough for us to understand the complete truth or more truth about the reality of who

God is that God provided his law written within even the hearts of every individual Romans 2 14 and 15 for when Gentiles who do not have the law like the Jews had the law by nature do what the law requires they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law they show that the

work of the law is written on their hearts while their conscience also bears witness so now we've got this additional revelation that God is there his displays of power and wisdom his divinity as we see it in creation but there's moral aspects of this one who is there as well and he's placed this law of God within the hearts of people that they might know more of him and have this display of the character of God the law of God written on their hearts so people know certain things are right and certain things are wrong and he's provided also that conscience within man that bears witness with that and we're very familiar with that that has spoken to us every one of us at different times as we've gone to do something that we know we shouldn't do this law within us that's telling us no don't do that and now we do that that conscience comes down as a judge helping us understand further you shouldn't have done that and we can give thanks that God has provided those revelations of himself those connecting points for us as we move through the day so I don't want to mistressing those as you move through the day and you see these displays be reminded that God is there

God is true he exists and in his kindness has reached out to us with these different connecting points that we might know that he is there well he did it in a very very special way in sending of his son Jesus Christ into the world we'll hear more about this from little children today if we need a reminder of it even more God come in the flesh Matthew 1.23 says behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which means what God with us wow what a kindness of God that he would actually come in the flesh and dwell with people and provide that very visible revelation of the reality of who

God is in the person of Jesus Christ God actually with us well while not all people were able to see Jesus while he was on the earth God then provided even a more an additional revelation in his word so that we might read his testimony of himself and his works what Jesus said what Jesus did and so we have as it says in 2 Timothy 3 16-17 all scriptures breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching reproof correction for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete equipped for every good work and we could read other scriptures Psalm 19 that also speaks of how the word of God can bring clarity to the minds of the simple we are all simple at one time not knowing

God but the word of God his written revelation by the power of the spirit is able to enlighten us to the reality of the specifics more specifics of God as we have been learning starting last week he has revealed just what we need to know about himself and in this case of our study that we might fear him as God so God has graciously provided the information we need about him and his works in the world in particular through Jesus Christ and his word and with that revelation from God the person comes in contact with God every day these connections are there that a gracious God has provided for people but even beyond that he has entered in this whole process by the work of his

[23 : 12] Holy Spirit in regenerating the individual the individual who is described in Ephesians 2 as being dead in trespasses and sins you wonder well how come everybody doesn't respond to these connecting points that God has provided because each one coming into this world is dead toward God they don't have this within themselves this life toward God so they're unable to see and so it takes an additional work of grace by God through his Holy Spirit to come alongside through the power of his word to quicken one that they might see and come alive and see the reality of these connecting points these revelations from God even Ephesians 2 5 again I don't have these on the screen for you but after Paul has described them being dead in their trespasses and sins he goes on to say even when we were dead in our trespasses referencing

God made us alive together with Christ that's what we're speaking about here now that's the work of God's Holy Spirit 1st Thessalonians 1 4 through 5 Paul says for we know brothers loved by God because Paul came to these people who were dead in trespasses and sins brought to them this gospel message that they didn't recognize they couldn't make sense of it before but something happened to them that all of a sudden it made sense to them and a change took place in their lives and that's what Paul is talking about here we know brothers loved by God that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit so as the Holy Spirit works in that way through the revelation of God it's at that point that that initial response of the fear of the Lord takes place a change has taken place within the individual they see something that they've never seen before they see

God in truth anybody who sees God in truth in particular for the first time might tremble in regard to who this God is and in regard to who they are before such a holy God so what response does a person have toward this God well indeed the fear of the Lord may at times there might be this

trembling fear as the individual sees the reality of the holiness of God and the justice of God and again the reality of their own sinfulness before such a holy God the desperate condition that they're in standing before him condemnation that they're under that at any moment this God could end their life and they could go into eternity separated separated separated from this great God of grace and love and that is the right fear of God I mean it would be wrong not to fear

God in that way a quote in Jerry Bridges book says it's the essence of impiety or ungodliness not to be afraid of God when there's a reason to be afraid the scripture throughout prescribes the necessity of this fear of God under all the circumstances in which our sinful situation makes us liable to God's righteous judgment wow what a reality to be standing before such a holy God in my sinful state and without this fear of God the individual just continues on his way continues in sin disregard for this one and such were we all at one point at this point we can't hardly imagine understanding what our condition was and who God was that how could

I disregard God what was wrong with me well we understand now what was wrong with us at the time but that we would disregard one such as God in that way and just go on my way like I'm the one that's in control in Romans 1 Paul once describing the extent of sinful living that people had given themselves to he wrote that they gave themselves to such sinful living because there's no fear of God before their eyes that's the reality of it but for the individual that has heard the truth been quickened by the Holy Spirit and has responded in faith in Christ and repents the trembling fear of God is replaced with a reverential awe of love his love God's love his mercy and the grace of God that has brought the individual near now as a son as a child of God and that's what Paul emphasizes again in 1 Thessalonians 1.6 he said you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the

[28 : 40] Holy Spirit so they it's not like oh no more fear of God fear of God was still there but it took on a completely different expression in their lives there was now the joy of the Holy Spirit in their lives as they now recognize still recognize this great God this holy God but they were in different relationship with him now as they heard the gospel as they believed that gospel by faith in Jesus Christ and now were in union with Jesus Christ and now stood in position as a son as a child of God and therefore they had joy the fruit of the Spirit he now delights in fearing God and revering God there's a newness of life with a new beginnings for these people who now know God so what are some of those delights and some of those joys that's what I want to transition to at this point some of those delights of new life in Christ

Jesus first one united to Jesus Christ and now adopted as a child of God so many different scripture verses John chapter one after John describes how Jesus came into the world some rejected him who are the ones that rejected the ones who did not see in truth who he was the ones who did not fear God they disregarded him but there was some that understood there was some who did receive him and that's what we're reading about what John is telling us about John 1 12 but to all he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor the will of flesh nor the will of man but of God there's been a change in their lives there's been a change in the lives of most of us here today and so now we stand yes indeed with the fear of the God fear of the Lord but as sons children of

God Ephesians 2 4-10 says but God loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus you see how much we have with him in him in this union with Jesus Christ Ephesians 1 4 through 5 in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ Jeremy recently gave a lesson on adoption what a precious description reality of our relationship those of us who were far off estranged separated from God certainly not children of God but children of wrath of the devil the spirit that now works in the children of the disobedience God has brought us near by faith in his son

Jesus Christ so near that we are members of the very household of God and identified adopted as his children Ephesians 2 19 says that so then you are no longer strangers and aliens but your fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God on and on we could go through the scripture showing the the wonder and the beauty the delight of this union with Jesus Christ but let's go on to another one now we are people at peace with God Romans 5 1 and 2 therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God for our Lord Jesus Christ is that something to delight in it's a great delight that we have that as we move through understanding that any moment my life could be taken from me well I might not like the process by which that would take

I don't have to fear but I can have delight in this fear of God as I consider my eternal destiny that I could enter at any moment because I have peace with God Jesus is the one who endured the wrath of God on my behalf and God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him and having that righteousness of God in Jesus Christ now no need for wrath upon me the price has been paid God and so I so I am accepted in peace with God beyond that another delight is God's Holy Spirit dwells within his child 1 Corinthians 6 19 and 20 many of you know these verses don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God you're not your own for you were bought with a price so glorify [33 : 57] God in your body certainly it is a trembling thing for us to understand that God himself dwells within me by his Holy Spirit but it also is a delight because what that offers me and what that provision makes possible for me in this whole matter of being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ it's God's Holy Spirit dwelling within me that is moving from each stage of glory to glory in this transformation and the likeness of Jesus Christ oh we can rejoice and give thanks for that because in myself there would not be the strength and desire to move me in that direction on a consistent basis so we have the Holy Spirit within us well this is one of those times I'd just love to open it up to you and let you share some of those delights that come to your mind but sorry don't have time you'll have to go home and talk about it amongst yourselves or after the service whatever but let me go on to share something else of what

Jerry Bridges presents 119 oh how abundant in your goodness he writes which you have stored up for those who fear you and work for those who take refuge in you in the sight of the children of mankind in the previous verses in Psalm 31 David has described the afflictions from the wicked that he's experienced but the afflictions are small in comparison to how does he describe them those manifestations the abundant abundance manifestations of the goodness of God so God is stored up for those that fear him it's kind of like treasured up for those who fear him those manifestations of goodness that will come at just the right time that his people need them for those who take refuge in him and he'll do this in the sight of all people imagine that

God is providing for you manifestations of his goodness in your times of trial so that people could see something of the goodness and wonder and magnificence of God through you that wouldn't happen if you weren't going through that trial and difficulty joy delight in fearing in God because he has these manifestations of his goodness that he's ready to pour out for you in those times that you need them what a delight to be a child of such a heavenly father who knows how to care for his children there is indeed joy in fearing God let's move on to another one Proverbs 1 7 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge fools despise wisdom instruction well here we go the fear of the Lord is that foundation that provides really the right motive for the pursuit of knowledge and even the right use of knowledge we know that there's ways that would force to take you you