

The FEAR of the LORD

The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high...He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

Isaiah 33:5-6

Even though the 'Fear of the Lord' is a subject of huge importance in the Bible, we seem to avoid thinking about it much. Maybe it's because it sounds somewhat scary! Or maybe we don't really understand what it means; as there seems to be very little teaching about 'the Fear of the Lord' in the churches of our time. Maybe it's because there is a real lack of the true knowledge of God, resulting in little or no fear of the Lord. Most Christians know some things *about* God, but they don't know Him in the sense of *personal intimate knowledge*; which is the true source and motivation of the 'Fear of the Lord'. God created us for Himself, and longs for us to know Him and His ways so that we can live as He has chosen in the fear of the Lord. But so often it seems that we prefer to occupy ourselves with our personal interests – we put our own self-life on the front seat, and God on the back seat.

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul ¹³ and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)

"Praise the LORD. Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands. Their children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever." (Psalms 112:1-3)

Written by Colin Winters as motivated by God. Apart from Him – I can do nothing! (*John 15:5*)

BUT – 'I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.' (*Philippians 4:13*)

Scriptures are from the New International Version unless noted otherwise.

Introduction

“Holy fear is the key to God’s sure foundation, unlocking the treasures of salvation, wisdom and knowledge. Along with the love of God, it composes the very foundation of life! We will soon learn that we cannot truly love God until we fear Him; nor can we properly fear Him until we love Him.” (Quoted from ‘The Fear of the Lord’ by John Bevere)

As you go through these studies, please submit yourselves to God and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of God’s Word to you, especially when it comes to the ‘fear of the Lord’. This is what Jesus taught us about the Holy Spirit: *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.” (John 16:13).*

The ‘fear of the Lord’ is one of the characteristics of the Spirit of God that rested on Jesus: *“...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.” (Isa 11:2-3).*

The fear of the Lord is not grasped by the mind, but is imprinted in our hearts. God will reveal it to the hearts of those who earnestly seek Him: *“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding-- indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, **then you will understand the fear of the LORD** and find the knowledge of God.” **Prov 2:1-5***

God’s personal name

Please note that throughout these studies I will often be using God’s personal name ‘**Yahweh**’, which is written as ‘LORD’ in most English Bibles. The reason why translators have done this seems to be rather poor, but it can’t be changed now. I have explained the importance of God’s personal name my booklet ‘What an Awesome God We Have’. But for now, let me say that it has great significance, and God has clearly stated that it is very important for us to know His name ‘Yahweh’. The verse below is a good example of this, and also an example of where I have replaced ‘LORD’ with His name ‘Yahweh’. So whenever you read verses in your Bible where ‘LORD’ is in capitals, remember, it is actually ‘Yahweh’.

Exod 3:15 *God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘**Yahweh**, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.’ **“This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation”.** (Also **Psa 135:13; Isa 42:8; Ezek 36:22-23; Hos 12:5**)*

1. The Fear of the LORD – why is it so important?

It is God Himself who has clearly spoken of the importance of ‘fearing’ Him. Yahweh – the One True God – the self-existing One – the High and Mighty God who inhabits eternity – the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of everything in the universe – the Holy One who is perfect in every part of His being – the God who made all things for Himself and who is worthy of all glory, honour, and praise for all He has done – the One who is so worthy of our total respect and reverence – the One whom we should stand in awe of – **He is the one we should ‘fear’.**

As we give time to reading God’s Word we should **naturally be encouraged** to stand in awe of Him, and bow before Him in reverence. But we should also recognise in the Scriptures that God **requires** us to ‘fear’ Him. It’s not so much that God has made it a rule for us to follow, and that if we don’t, He will beat us with a stick! No! **It is because God wants us to realize how important it is for us to know how worthy He is of our total respect and reverence.** That is why He is strongly encouraging us to live in the ‘fear of the LORD’ – the fear of Yahweh!

Before we give further explanation about what the ‘fear of the LORD’ means, we need to **see what God himself says about the importance** of it. While there are many Scriptures on this subject, we will look at just a few of them in this section, beginning with Yahweh's instructions to His chosen people Israel as they were being prepared to enter the Promised Land.

Deut 4:10 (ESV) *...Yahweh said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'*

Deut 5:29 *Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!*

Deut 10:12-21 *And now, Israel, what does Yahweh your God ask of you but to fear Yahweh your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul¹³ and to observe Yahweh’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?*

¹⁴ *To Yahweh your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.* ¹⁵ *Yet Yahweh set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today.* ¹⁶ *Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.* ¹⁷ *For Yahweh your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.* ¹⁸ *He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving*

them food and clothing.¹⁹ And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.²⁰ Fear Yahweh your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name.²¹ He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.

Deut 31:12-13 Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear Yahweh your God and follow carefully all the words of this law.¹³ Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear Yahweh your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

Even though God was speaking to Israel at that time, He was speaking about things that are extremely important to Him personally. Thus it is a clear expression of the heart of God; and He does not change. So what He is saying in Deuteronomy is true for all His people, including us. All Scripture is inspired by God, and is given for teaching us about God **so that we can know Him and His purposes for humanity**. Therefore, it is **still God's strong desire that we fear Him, walk in obedience to Him, love Him, and serve Him with our whole being**.

Even after Israel had entered the Promised Land, Yahweh continued to highlight the importance of fearing Him, speaking through His appointed leaders and prophets. These are just a couple of examples:

Jos 4:24 "He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear Yahweh your God."

1Sam 12:23-24 As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.²⁴ But be sure to fear Yahweh and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.

Generally, the people of Israel were not at all faithful in obeying God or living in the fear of the Lord. In fact they were continually stubborn and rebellious; worshipping foreign gods which Yahweh had forbidden them to do. Even though God was so gracious, and gave them many opportunities to repent and follow His ways, they refused – so God had to punish them by sending them into captivity. At that time He still had a plan for their future which He foretold through the prophets – a plan to restore them to the relationship with Himself which His people had abused. Jeremiah records God's promises of what He would do for His people; including His motivation to fear Him:

Jer 32:37-40 *I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. ³⁸ They will be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me.*

The ‘everlasting covenant’ was established by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And what God has done through Jesus was not just for the Jews – it was for all people who by faith accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord. It is because of Jesus crucifixion that we now have a sure foundation of salvation, wisdom and knowledge. Isaiah prophesied about this salvation and adds a very important comment:

Yahweh is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with his justice and righteousness. ⁶ He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of Yahweh is the key to this treasure.

Isa 33:5-6

A ‘key’ is what unlocks a door that is shutting us out from somewhere. And God is saying through Isaiah that **the ‘fear of the LORD’ is the key that unlocks the door**, and opens it up to the **treasures** of His salvation, wisdom and knowledge.

The Psalms include many encouragements to fear Yahweh. Following are a few of them, and there are more to come further on in this booklet.

Psa 22:23 *You who fear Yahweh, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!*

Psa 25:12 *Who, then, are those who fear Yahweh? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.*

As well as the emphasis to fear Yahweh in Psalm 33 there are also some of the reasons to do so.

Psa 33:8-19 *Let all the earth fear Yahweh; let all the people of the world revere him. ⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.*

¹⁰ *Yahweh foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.*

¹¹ *But the plans of Yahweh stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.*

¹² *Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh, the people he chose for his inheritance.*

¹³ From heaven Yahweh looks down and sees all mankind; ¹⁴ from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth— ¹⁵ he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

¹⁶ No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. ¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.

¹⁸ But the eyes of Yahweh are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, ¹⁹ to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

In the New Testament there are also Scriptures relating to the fear of the Lord.

Luke 12:4-5 "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. ⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

Phil 2:12-13 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Heb 10:29-31 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The early church was living in the fear of the Lord because of all the amazing things that were happening since the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out – firstly on the Jesus' disciples – and then on the thousands who heard the Good News of Jesus; repented of their sins; and accepted Jesus as Lord of their lives. Powerful things were happening as the Holy Spirit continued to heal people and deliver them from demons, and as He opened the hearts of people to recognize Jesus as the true Messiah.

Act 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

I trust that as you have meditated on all these Scriptures about the fear of the Yahweh, it will encourage you to give a greater priority to spending time getting to know Him more intimately. Yahweh is truly worthy of much greater reverence than we will ever know while we are in these mortal vessels.

Questions: 1. How important is God to you personally, and are you aware of the significance of the 'fear of the Lord'?

Q. 2. Would you like to know more about the riches of God's salvation, wisdom and knowledge? How do we get to know more about these treasures?

2. The Fear of the LORD – what does mean?

(Following on from the comments made in p.2)

While 'fear' normally means to be scared, or terrified; in the context of **'the fear of the Lord'** it means **to have the utmost respect and reverence for Almighty God;** and to **stand in awe of Him who is so much more worthy of all glory and honour than we can even imagine.**

This is the main sense in which the phrase - 'the fear of the LORD' is used in the Bible. **God is the most prominent and high-ranking person in the whole universe, and He deserves the greatest measure of respect and reverence.** And even though that measure is well beyond what we are able to give, God still calls every one of His people to grow in the 'fear of Yahweh' so that we will come to know how important He is, and how worthy He is of our total respect and reverence – and that also includes our total respect and submission to all **the instructions that God has given us in His Word.**

An enduring example of the 'fear of the Lord' is seen in the angels who are always in God's presence; who are very familiar with the high and mighty God; and who are continuously faced with His glory and majesty – they are always humbly bowing before Him in worship:

Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come." Rev 4:8

Such is their reverence of Yahweh Almighty; such is their fear of the Lord.

Therefore, because of who God is in all His greatness; majesty; holiness; power; and His sovereign Lordship over all things – **should we not also stand in awe of him; bow before Him in reverence; and worship Him always with our whole being?**

Should we not be consistently seeking God through His Word and Spirit, for the purpose of knowing Him more intimately; knowing how He wants us to be living for Him; and being committed to worshipping Him with our whole lives?

Not only is this what our High and exalted God **requires of all His people**, but it is what He **richly deserves** because of who He is, and all that He has done for us.

Question: Why is it that so many Christians fall well short of honouring God as He deserves – why do we seem to have a level of respect and reverence for God that is so much lower than He is worthy of?

It should also be said that because God is Holy – absolutely perfect, and the Righteous Judge of all people, we should fear – in the sense of being terrified – **if we are on the wrong side with God** – if we haven't repented of our sins and accepted Jesus as Saviour and Lord of our lives.

3. The Fear of the Lord, and Loving God with ALL our heart; with ALL our soul; with ALL our mind; and with ALL our strength

***Mark 12:30** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'*

Loving Yahweh our God with ALL that we are, and the '**fear of the Lord**', go hand-in-hand. You cannot do one without the other; they are interwoven.

Perhaps we could say that the 'fear of the Lord' is the awe inspired reverence for Yahweh which is **deeply embedded in our heart**; but which also **must be lovingly worked out in our lives**. This is the key issue of '**agape love**' which '*...can only be known from the actions it inspires; it is a strong desire, and an active interest in the well-being of the person loved.*' (Quoted from a Bible Dictionary)

This is not to suggest that there are no emotional feelings in our love for God. If we have come to appreciate how awesome God is – including His astonishing creative powers; His greatness and superiority; His sovereign Lordship over all things; and most importantly His extravagant love; mercy; and grace for such totally undeserving creatures as we all are – then we should be affected emotionally. But the main point of the Bible dictionary comment above is that there should be a practical outcome arising from our emotional response to the love of God. So we can say that **if we are not showing our love to God in heartfelt and practical ways, then we do not love Him as He requires, and as He deserves**. And that lack of love on our part only goes to show that we don't really know Him – we don't really appreciate His awesome greatness; love; mercy; and grace.

The most mind-blowing way in which Yahweh Himself displayed His agape love for us, was by sending His only Begotten Son to suffer the punishment for our sins,

and the sins of all humanity. And this extravagant demonstration of the love of God in the crucifixion of Jesus on our behalf, should not only grab our attention, but **should also motivate us to sincerely love Yahweh and His Son Jesus.**

***1John 4:7-11** Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.*

¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

4. How do we determine the measure of our love for God?

Notice that God puts emphasis on loving Him with ALL our heart, ALL our soul, and ALL our might. That means with **everything that we are – our whole being** – not just a bit here and there. That’s an extremely high challenge, and we can’t achieve it in a short space of time. In fact it will be a growing thing throughout our whole life. **But it needs to be a high priority for us if we truly want to love God as He deserves, and as He desires.**

It should be obvious that if we give little attention to God, then we don’t love Him that much. For you personally – how much time and effort do you put into getting to know God by diligently seeking Him? Do you spend more time being caught up with entertainment or social media, or with your lifestyle, than you do in seeking God through His Word and prayer? How much time do you personally give to glorifying God through praise and worship, or by being a living example of Christ?

These are just a few of the questions that we should be asking ourselves, and our answers should give us a clear indication of the measure of our love for God. God is so worthy of all glory and honour, and the more we appreciate His awesome greatness, the more keenly we will respond by loving Him in tangible ways.

Encouragement

So far in this booklet about the ‘Fear of the LORD’, we have considered the importance, and the meaning of the fear of the LORD – the fear of Yahweh. However, the true fear of Yahweh can only be fully appreciated when we personally spend time seeking to know God and building our personal relationship with Him.

The reality of the fear of Yahweh is *not* achieved intellectually, but by the revelation to our hearts of who God really is in all His greatness, majesty and holiness.

You will not achieve this simply by reading through this booklet, but by revising it; spending time meditating on what you have learned; and especially by meditating on all the verses relating to the fear of the LORD – up to this point and continuing into the next section.

To conclude this section, let's read some verses which speak of how great and awesome our God is. He is so worthy of our utmost respect and reverence.

1Chron 29:11-13 *Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. ¹² Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. ¹³ Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.*

Rom 11:33-36 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

This is our God – the One who made us for Himself. Did you get that? God made us **for** Himself – not for our own self, or for our own satisfaction. Let us worship Him.

Questions. 1: From what we have studied so far, how would you explain what the 'Fear of the LORD (Yahweh)' means?

5. How do we engage ourselves more fully in the fear of the Lord?

a. Knowing God more intimately

As already noted: truly knowing God is the real source and motivation of the 'Fear of the Lord'. God wants us to realize how important it is for us to know how worthy He is of our total respect and reverence; and as we personally spend time seeking to know God, and to build our personal relationship with Him, then we will naturally grow in our fear of the Lord.

There is nothing more important in life than getting to know God, and growing in your personal relationship with Him. As Jesus said in His prayer to the

Father shortly before His arrest: *"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."* **John 17:3**

Essentially what Jesus is saying is that **the essence of eternal life is knowing the Father and the Son**. This 'knowing' is not just knowing facts about God; but knowing Him in the sense of personal relationship knowledge. This is what eternal life is all about. It's not simply a matter of accepting Jesus as Saviour. That's just the point of introduction to a personal relationship with God. And from there on it is God's purpose that we consistently grow in our relationship with Him, and live in the fear of Yahweh.

Because there is much more to be said about the importance of knowing God from a biblical perspective, I have written a separate booklet – 'The Most Important Thing in Life: Knowing God'. If you would like a copy, please let me know.

b. Working out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling

The true sense of the 'fear of Yahweh' should also be **the controlling motive in spiritual and moral matters in our lives**. This could mean having a 'fear' of His power and His righteous judgement if we have sinned and not repented. But generally it means that we ought to have a serious concern about offending God – **we should be doing everything we can to avoid sinning against our Holy God**. God wants us to: *'...work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.'* (**Phil 2:12-13**)

Salvation is a free gift from God, given to us because of His amazing compassion, love, and grace. But once we have received the gift of salvation, we have our part to play, even as God Himself is working in us to fulfil His good purpose, which is to change us to be more and more like Jesus:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. **Rom 8:28-29**

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. **2Cor 3:18**

This is God's highest purpose for us, and the thing we should be working towards as we *'...work out our salvation with fear and trembling...'*, and as we *Make every effort ... to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.* **Heb 12:14**

But remember this very important thing: **God does not expect us to be doing this with our own abilities and strengths – rather, He has provided us with**

everything we need to be able to complete the mission. This includes: the Holy Spirit; God's Word; and the gift of a personal relationship with Almighty God.

As we get to know more about God personally, it should lead us to having a stronger commitment to love Him and to honour Him in every part of our lives. This is the fear of Yahweh, and it is also what true worship is about.

c. Presenting our bodies to God as a living sacrifice.

This is our true and proper worship – it is a whole of life response to the worthiness of God. Worship is not just what we do in church on Sunday – rather it involves our whole life, and giving our whole selves to Him. After writing so much about the full significance of the gospel in the Book of Romans, the apostle Paul appealed to his readers:

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. **Rom 12:1-2***

A Bible commentator describes those who fear the Lord as: **“Those who honour God, and order their lives in accordance with His will because of their reverence for Him.”** As you have been going through this booklet, have you been challenged about your level of respect for God? Is He worthy enough for you to make sacrifices in your life so that you live your life as God wants you to, and not as you want?

We are called to give our whole being as a living sacrifice because of God's great mercy; because of our love for Him; and also because **Jesus is the example we are to follow.** He is the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Heb 12:1-2 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Phil 2:1-9 *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

⁶ *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*⁷ *rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.* ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!*

⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name...*

Jesus is our example – He is the 'pioneer and perfecter of faith.' He loves His Father, and He loves us, to the point of being crucified on the cross for our sins.

d. Being crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us

It seems that too many Christians remain attached to the things of the **world**; and also of the **'flesh'**. The 'flesh' is our natural sinful nature which wants to cling to; or be involved with things which appeal to us for our own self-interest or satisfaction.

The use of the word 'world' has a number of different applications, even in the Scriptures; and it's important that we understand it correctly according to the context in which it is used. In the Scriptures included in this section, the meaning is best described by Vine's NT Dictionary as the: *'...present condition (or state) of human affairs in alienation from, and opposition to God...'* And from a biblical perspective, **the state of human affairs is under the power of the evil one.**

Scriptures which are clear examples of the use of 'world' or the 'flesh' as described above:

John 12:31 *Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.*

Eph 2:1-2 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

1John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.*

These verses should grab our attention, as they are warnings about the ways in which we all too easily become engaged in the things of the world. The 'lust of the flesh' and the 'lust of the eyes' are those things which are part of our natural self-life – our 'flesh', and which lure us to the world's entertainment.

The whole **entertainment industry** (apart from Christian movies) is part of the 'world', and therefore under the control of the evil one.

1John 5:19 *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

This includes worldly movies and TV programs, worldly music and discos. Anyone who loves being entertained by these things is being a friend of the world, and therefore makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

This will be a real challenge for many of us because we have grown up in an environment where such entertainment is the norm, and perhaps we are quite unaware of what God's Word has to say about it.

But in spite of such familiarity, and even though worldly entertainment is so attractive, and fun to be part of, we should hate the idea of being **entertained by stuff that comes from the devil**. Even social media, which can have its good side, is also an instrument of the devil by which he influences many people in the wrong direction.

The response of many people to this is that they carefully check out the content of what they are watching. But the real issue is not whether **the content** appears to be quite harmless, but that **the source** of the entertainment is **the devil himself**. The devil's works can appear to be so harmless, but he always has underlying and deceitful motives for the purpose of leading people astray, and to 'steal, kill and destroy' (**John 10:10**). He even used the Word of God in his efforts to tempt Jesus. But Jesus knew his motives and responded with "It is written..."

As well as the seriousness of the devil's control over the things of the 'world', is the concern that **entertainment** is a 'passion and desire of the flesh' (Gal 5:24 below). It is a '*thing of the world*', a '*desire of the flesh*' and of '*the eyes*' (see **1 John 2:15-16** above).

But – '*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*' **Gal 5:24**

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. **Gal 2:20**
May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. **Gal 6:14**

This means that we are meant to be dead to the world and all its self-satisfying influences. **Therefore, due to our 'fear of the Lord', our attention should rather be**

on that which pleases God, and glorifies Christ. As you read through the following verses think carefully about what they are saying, and ask yourself – ‘Do I understand what this means, and am I applying it to my life?’

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*

2Cor 5:14-15 *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

Col 3:1-3 *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Also **2Cor 4:18**)*

1John 5:3-5 *In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

How can we say that we love God with our whole being; or that we have a genuine fear of the Lord – if we are still attached to the things of the world?

Jesus call to His followers was to die to self; to lay down our lives; to take up our cross and follow Him. Even if our love for family and friends is stronger than our love for Jesus, then we are falling short of what He desires of us. Jesus made this very clear:

Luk 14:25-27 *Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. (Also **Matt 34:34-39**)*

e. King Solomon's conclusion of the matter

Maybe you can understand why King Solomon – after a life of both success and failure, could say:

Ecc 12:13 *Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.*

God had given Solomon amazing wisdom, and it brought him great success. However, later on in his life he didn't fully obey God's commandments. In the end, Solomon looked back over his life, and after much meditation he wrote the book of

Ecclesiastes in which he examines life apart from the fear of Yahweh. His response to every searching question was – *‘Meaningless! Everything is meaningless!’* And at the very end of the book, he concludes that **the whole matter of life is summed up in fearing God and keeping his commandments.**

Meditation: Do you want to waste your life by pursuing your own personal desires and ambitions – or do you want to live your life in the fear of Yahweh? In spite of whatever difficulties and trials may come, do you still want to glorify and honour the One who is so worthy of our total respect and reverence? As Solomon said: *“...this is the duty of all mankind.”*

6. More of God’s Word to us About the Fear of Yahweh

As we have clearly seen up to this point, the 'fear of the Lord' is of huge importance; firstly, because of who God is in every aspect of His greatness; majesty; powers; authority; and holiness – He is so worthy of all glory; honour; and worship. And secondly, because He rightly requires us to live our lives in the fear of Yahweh.

The Scriptures abound with many verses which not only highlight its importance, but also tell us the results and blessings of having a **genuine and consistent fear of the Lord**. Following are a few more verses about **its importance**; and then verses of **encouragement about the results and blessings**.

a. Its importance

➤ **His holiness should motivate us to fear Him:**

Rev 15:4 *Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy.”*

Psa 89:6-8 *For who in the skies above can compare with Yahweh? Who is like Yahweh among the heavenly beings? ⁷ In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. ⁸ Who is like you, Yahweh, God Almighty? You, Yahweh, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.*

Isa 8:13 *Yahweh Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread.*

➤ **The fear of Yahweh is necessary for true worship:**

Psa 5:7 *But I, by your great love, can come into your house; in reverence I bow down toward your holy temple.*

Psa 96:4-9 For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. ⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but Yahweh made the heavens. ⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. ⁷ Ascribe to Yahweh, O families of the peoples, ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength! ⁸ Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! ⁹ Worship Yahweh in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

Heb 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe...

b. The results – or blessings from having a true ‘fear of Yahweh’?

Please keep in mind that we don't pursue the 'fear of Yahweh' because we want to be blessed, but rather because Yahweh – our God – is so worthy of our total respect and reverence; and worthy of glory and honour beyond what we could ever give to Him. Remember also that God knows our hearts, and He knows whether or not our fear of Him is sincere:

*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. **Heb 4:13***

The Fear of Yahweh ...

➤ **Provides security, and is a fountain of life.**

Prov 14:26-27 Whoever fears Yahweh has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge. ²⁷ The fear of Yahweh is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.

Psa 34:7-11 The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. ⁸ Taste and see that Yahweh is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. ⁹ Fear Yahweh, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. ¹⁰ The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek Yahweh lack no good thing. ¹¹ Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of Yahweh.

➤ **Brings pleasure to God**

Psa 147:11 Yahweh delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

➤ **Results in God's great love and compassion**

Psa 103:8-13 Yahweh is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not

treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, **so great is his love for those who fear him;**¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so **Yahweh has compassion on those who fear him...**

Psa 103:17-18 But from everlasting to everlasting Yahweh's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children--¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

➤ Brings God's blessings

Psa 112:1-2 Praise Yahweh. Blessed are those who fear Yahweh, who find great delight in his commands.² Their children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

Psa 115:11-13 You who fear him, trust in Yahweh -- he is their help and shield.¹² Yahweh remembers us and will bless us: He will bless his people Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron,¹³ he will bless those who fear Yahweh -- small and great alike.

➤ Results in the hatred of evil and will keep us from sinning

Prov 8:13 To fear Yahweh is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.

Exod 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

➤ Comes to those who diligently and persistently seek God's Wisdom

Prov 2:1-7 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding--³ indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,⁵ then you will understand the fear of Yahweh and find the knowledge of God.⁶ For Yahweh gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.⁷ He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless...

➤ It is the beginning of wisdom

Psa 111:10 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

Prov 9:10-11 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.¹¹ For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.

➤ **It opens up the treasures of salvation, wisdom and knowledge**

Isa 33:6 He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of Yahweh is the key to this treasure.

➤ **It assures us of God's great goodness**

Psa 31:19 How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you.

➤ **It results in enjoyment of our work, and lives that are fully rewarded**

Psa 128:1-4 A song of ascents. Blessed are all who fear Yahweh, who walk in obedience to him. ² You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. ³ Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. ⁴ Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears Yahweh.

Conclusion

As we stated on p. 16 above – ‘Please keep in mind that we don’t pursue the ‘fear of Yahweh’ because we want to be blessed, but rather because Yahweh – our God – is so worthy of our total respect and reverence; and worthy of glory and honour beyond what we could ever give to Him.’

God has given us all the promises above to encourage us and to motivate us to have a greater fear of Yahweh. And this can only happen as God becomes the number one person in our lives, and as we regularly read His Word so that we can get to know Him more. **This is what He created us for.**

As we have seen throughout this booklet, Yahweh has emphasised throughout His Word the significance of having a true fear of Himself. We have also seen – to some degree – just why He is so worthy of our total reverence, and why we should simply stand in awe of Him – because of who He is, and because of the extravagance of His love, mercy, and grace towards such undeserving creatures as we all are.

Meditating our way through the following thanksgiving Psalm of David is an appropriate way to conclude this booklet. But let me also suggest that you use it more than once as a devotional booklet, for the purpose of allowing the importance of the ‘fear of Yahweh’ to sink more deeply into your heart, and to change you from within, as is Yahweh's purpose for all His people.

1Chron 16:23-36 *Sing to Yahweh, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day.*

²⁴ *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.*

²⁵ *For great is Yahweh and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.*

²⁶ *For all the gods of the nations are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens.*

²⁷ *Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his dwelling place.*

²⁸ *Ascribe to Yahweh, all you families of nations, ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.*

²⁹ *Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship Yahweh in the splendor of his holiness.*

³⁰ *Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved.*

³¹ *Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "Yahweh reigns!"*

³² *Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them!*

³³ *Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before Yahweh, for he comes to judge the earth.*

³⁴ *Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

³⁵ *Cry out, "Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise."*

³⁶ *Praise be to Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said "Amen" and "Praise Yahweh."*