

**"The Starting Point of Knowledge"**  
**(Proverbs 1:7)**

Introduction: Last week we were exhorted by the Scriptures to increase our storehouse of Biblical knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The knowledge of God and of His will should be the most precious to us as Christians. It is certainly the most practical knowledge that we will ever possess, for all of it impacts our lives in one way or another. What could be more valuable to you than to know what it is that God is like, what it is He loves and what it is that He desires for you to do? This knowledge is very precious, the most precious thing that you or I could ever possess. Therefore, we should do everything within our power to get it and to hold it fast. Solomon wrote, "HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO FINDS WISDOM, AND THE MAN WHO GAINS UNDERSTANDING. FOR ITS PROFIT IS BETTER THAN THE PROFIT OF SILVER, AND ITS GAIN THAN FINE GOLD. SHE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN JEWELS; AND NOTHING YOU DESIRE COMPARES WITH HER. LONG LIFE IS IN HER RIGHT HAND; IN HER LEFT HAND ARE RICHES AND HONOR. HER WAYS ARE PLEASANT WAYS, AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE. SHE IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO TAKE HOLD OF HER, AND HAPPY ARE ALL WHO HOLD HER FAST" (Prov. 3:13-18). When you realize that apart from this heavenly wisdom you could do absolutely nothing to please God, it becomes even more precious. Knowledge is necessary for everything that you do. For instance, the knowledge of language is absolutely necessary if you are to communicate with someone else. How could you even talk with another person if you did not KNOW his language? I was once down in Tijuana for a weekend staying with a missionary friend. Everyone in his house and in his church spoke only Spanish. But I did not know Spanish. I could communicate only the most basic things through sign language. But if I hadn't known how to symbolize those few things, even that would have been impossible. How can you do anything without knowledge? Just look at a child who is first learning to walk, to talk and to live in this world, and you will see that apart from knowledge, even the simplest things are impossible. If knowledge is so essential for even those things which are the least important in your lives, how much more necessary is it in your walk with the Lord?

But this knowledge which Solomon is referring to in the book of Proverbs, like anything else, has a beginning. It must start somewhere. The world began when the Lord created it at the beginning. You began when you were conceived in the womb of your mother. And both you and the world had its origin in the eternal decree of God. Everything you do must have a beginning: first, as an idea in your mind, then as a plan, and then as you work out that plan. Solomon is saying this morning that there is a starting point to the knowledge of God as well, a place where that understanding and wisdom must begin. And this is what He gives to us this morning. And we will see that,

***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.***

***First, we will see what it means to fear the Lord, second, why we should fear Him; and third, why you must start here if you are to learn true knowledge.***

**I. First of all, What Does the Bible Mean by the Fear of the Lord?**

**A. You All Know What Fear Is. All of You Have Been Fearful of Someone or Something at Some Time in Your Life.**

- 1. Maybe at one time your life was threatened by someone. Wendal and Carolyn probably felt a degree of fear when that person or**

group of persons threw that rock through their living room window.

2. Perhaps you were threatened once by a wild animal. When I was a small boy, walking with my Dad in West Virginia, a very large dog lunged at us with a very loud growl and bark. My dad pushed me behind him and tried to ward off the dog. Once while walking in the mountains, we passed by a coiled rattle snake which was right next to us under a bush. My dad picked me up and ran away from the snake. Both of those situations created fear.
  3. Maybe your life was once threatened by some disease which looked as though it was going to take your life.
  4. All of you children have at one time or another gotten into trouble for doing something wrong. And you were afraid of what the consequences of your actions would be.
  5. If you have experienced these, or any number of other things like them, then you understand something about fear. Fear is an emotion; it is a terror; it is very uncomfortable, and it is caused by a sense that you are about to receive something which is going to be very unpleasant, something that you don't want to go through.
- B. Since You Already Know What Fear Is, Then It Shouldn't Be Difficult for You to Understand the Fear of the Lord. It Means that You Are to Fear Him.
1. The fear of the Lord is not very different from the fear of anything else. As a matter of fact, the same Hebrew word is used to express both kinds. We often describe this fear of God as reverence, or awe. But included in the meaning of both of these words is the element of fear. It is mixed with other things, such as respect and love, but it still contains the element of fear.
  2. Charles Bridges, in his commentary on the book of Proverbs, a book which is a classic exposition of Proverbs, asked, "But what is this fear of the Lord? It is that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law. His wrath is so bitter, and his love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please him, and -- because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptations -- a holy watchfulness and fear, 'that he might not sin against him.' (Heb. xii. 28, 29.) This enters into every exercise of the mind, every object of life [Chap. xxiii. 171" (Proverbs 3-41.
- He points out, "The fear of the Lord was a lovely grace in the perfect humanity of Jesus. (Isa. xi. 2, 3.) ["THEN A SHOOT WILL SPRING FROM THE STEM OF JESSE, AND A BRANCH FROM HIS ROOTS WILL BEAR FRUIT. AND THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WILL REST ON HIM, THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING, THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL AND STRENGTH, THE SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE FEAR OF THE LORD. AND HE WILL DELIGHT IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD"] Let it be the test of our 'predestination to be conformed to his image.' (Rom. viii. 29.) It is the genuine spirit of adoption. The child of God has only one dread -- to offend his Father; only one desire -- to please and delight in him. Thus is the fear of the Lord connected with his love. 'the heart that is touched with the loadstone of Divine love, trembles still with godly

fear.' If this temper is the beginning, it is also [as the word imports) the head -- of wisdom -- not only its first rudiment, but its matured exercise" (87-88).

3. To fear the Lord means that we should be afraid lest we do anything to bring His wrath or chastisement upon ourselves.

## II. Having Seen What the Fear of the Lord Is, Let Us Now Consider Why We Should Fear the Lord?

- A. It Has Become Very Common in Our Day to Treat the Lord More as an Equal than as Our Lord.
  1. We tend to think of God more in His role as heavenly Father, than as the great and terrible Judge of all Creation.
  2. We tend to think of Jesus more as a brother, than as the Sovereign Lord over all of God's kingdom.
  3. These things are true for the Christian. God has adopted us. We are His children. We have free access to Him through Christ.
  4. Jesus has also called us His friends. He is the friend that sticks closer than a brother. He is the friend who has laid down His life for His people.
- B. But You Must Never Forget that You Are Still to Fear the Lord.
  1. You must fear Him because He is the awesome and terrifying Lord of all the universe.
  2. You must fear Him because He holds your destiny in His hands.
    - a. If the situations you have faced in life caused you to fear, how much more should you fear the prospect of standing before the infinitely holy God of all glory to whom all things are opened and exposed, including the innermost recesses of your hearts to be judged for your sins?
    - b. How much should you fear that holy gaze into your heart even this morning?
    - c. If you are outside of Christ, how much should you fear being under His wrath and condemnation? You will never be able to bear the awful punishments that await you in hell, when once His terrifying wrath is poured out.
    - d. And how much should you who profess to be in Christ fear lest by your continual rebellion against His holy Word you prove in the end not to be saved at all, but must face His eternal fury and wrath?
  3. You must fear Him because it is evidence that you have truly been born again from above.
    - a. It is the godly heart that fears the Lord. Luke tells us, "SO THE CHURCH THROUGHOUT ALL JUDEA AND GALILEE AND SAMARIA ENJOYED PEACE, BEING BUILT UP; AND, GOING ON IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD AND IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, IT CONTINUED TO INCREASE" (Acts 9:31).
    - b. The ungodly man does not fear the Lord. The psalmist writes, "TRANSGRESSION SPEAKS TO THE UNGODLY WITHIN HIS HEART; THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE HIS EYES" (36:1).
  4. You should fear Him because there are many blessings which come to those of you who do. Just listen to a few of these which He has promised you.
    - a. "THE SECRET OF THE LORD IS FOR THOSE WHO FEAR HIM, AND HE WILL MAKE THEM KNOW HIS COVENANT" (Ps. 25:14).

- b. "HOW GREAT IS THY GOODNESS, WHICH THOU HAST STORED UP FOR THOSE WHO FEAR THEE" (Ps. 31:19).
  - c. "BEHOLD, THE EYE OF THE LORD IS ON THOSE WHO FEAR HIM, ON THOSE WHO HOPE FOR HIS LOVINGKINDNESS, TO DELIVER THEIR SOUL FROM DEATH, AND TO KEEP THEM ALIVE IN FAMINE" (Ps. 33:18-19).
  - d. "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD ENCAMPS AROUND THOSE WHO FEAR HIM, AND RESCUES THEM" (Ps. 34:7).
  - e. "FOR AS HIGH AS THE HEAVENS ARE ABOVE THE EARTH, SO GREAT IS HIS LOVINGKINDNESS TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM" (Ps. 103:11).
  - f. "BUT THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF THE LORD IS FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING ON THOSE WHO FEAR HIM, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS TO CHILDREN'S CHILDREN, TO THOSE WHO KEEP HIS COVENANT, AND WHO REMEMBER HIS PRECEPTS TO DO THEM" (Ps. 103:17-18).
  - g. These are just some of the many blessings which the Lord has purposed to give to His children, to those who fear Him and keep His commandments.
5. But most importantly, you should fear the Lord because He commands you to fear Him.
- a. Samuel said to the people of God, "ONLY FEAR THE LORD AND SERVE HIM IN TRUTH WITH ALL YOUR HEART; FOR CONSIDER WHAT GREAT THINGS HE HAS DONE FOR YOU" (1 Sam. 12:24).
  - b. Jehoshaphat commanded the people of Judah, "NOW THEN LET THE FEAR OF THE LORD BE UPON YOU; BE VERY CAREFUL WHAT YOU DO, FOR THE LORD OUR GOD WILL HAVE NO PART IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, OR PARTIALITY, OR THE TAKING OF A BRIBE" (2 Chr. 19:7).
  - c. Peter said, "HONOR ALL MEN; LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD, FEAR GOD, HONOR THE KING" (1 Pet. 2:17).
  - d. And your Lord Jesus Christ said, "AND DO NOT FEAR THOSE WHO KILL THE BODY, BUT ARE UNABLE TO KILL THE SOUL; BUT RATHER FEAR HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DESTROY BOTH SOUL AND BODY IN HELL" (Matt. 10:28).
    - (i) We often fear man, but we don't fear the Lord. And isn't this because we are afraid of what they will do to us, and are always counting on the Lord's mercy? But the Lord commands you to fear Him more than man, for even the worst afflictions which men may afflict you with on this earth are as nothing compared to His wrath.
    - (ii) Jonathan Edwards pointed out to his parishioners, in a sermon on Luke 12:4-5, "That the worst evils that the power of evil men can bring upon Christians, in the permissive providence of God, are absolutely nothing at all in comparison to damnation."
    - (iii) He says that some were afflicted by being, "tormented without rest till they fell; roasted until almost dead and then restored for further roasting; tied to posts to watch their infants dying; [fried] on gridirons; put in hot iron chains; their flesh torn off [their] bones with hot iron pincers; scourged till [their] bowels fell out; cords twisted about their heads till [their] brains gushed out; faces chiseled; fingers pulled off with hot pincers; molten lead poured down their throats; necks squeezed off between folding doors," and yet "all of these things bore no comparison to damnation, and the saints could properly regard them as but 'light afflictions but for a moment'" (Gerstner 236).

- (iv) The wrath of God is far more severe than anything man could possibly devise. And yet, isn't the case that we do not fear Him, because we do not think that we will be the recipients of His wrath? Ah, but if you do not fear Him, you will receive it in all of its fullness.
- e. There is more reference to the fear of the Lord in the Scripture than to the fear of anything else. As a matter of fact, He is the only thing that you are commanded to fear. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6:13, "YOU SHALL FEAR ONLY THE LORD YOUR GOD; AND YOU SHALL WORSHIP HIM, AND SWEAR BY HIS NAME."
- f. Indeed the whole world is commanded to fear Him. The psalmist wrote, "LET ALL THE EARTH FEAR THE LORD; LET ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD STAND IN AWE OF HIM" (Ps. 33:8).
- g. All should fear Him, because one day, when He allows death to swallow them up, they will all stand before Him to give an accounting of their lives.
- h. Some will stand clothed in their own righteousness and will fear and tremble as the Lord calls every one of their sins to account. They will be overwhelmed with horror when they realize that every one of those sins will cause them to sink deeper and deeper into the lake of fire, where they will be tormented day and night for time without end. Oh how they wish then that they would have feared the Lord while they were alive!
- i. But others will stand clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ and will tremble with holy fear when they see their great King sitting in judgment before them. They will realize that but for the grace of the Lord Jesus, they too would be cast into that fiery furnace. But because of His righteousness, they will stand in His perfection and will be acquitted. How thankful they will be that they had learned the fear of the Lord!
- j. Where will you stand on that day? Will you shake in terror when the Lord pronounces His judgment against you? Or will you be filled with joy when He acquits you of all of your guilt for Jesus' sake?
- k. You may know right now by examining your heart. Do you tremble with holy fear now? Is the fear of the Lord in your heart now? Does your life show that you do fear Him by your turning from all your sin and evil, and by seeking holiness of life? Or is your heart still in love with sin? You hate to hear about holiness, because you love your sin and you have no intention of parting with it?
- l. You may only escape God's wrath if you fear Him enough to run from your sins with all your heart, and lay hold of Jesus, and love Him, and serve Him, and honor Him with all that is within you. A rare flush of affection will not do. Only obeying the Lord now and again will not do. That is like throwing crumbs to the Lord to try and appease Him, when what He wants is your whole life and heart.
- m. I am speaking to each one of you here this morning. Don't think that this is just for your neighbor. Don't judge your life by what you see in your neighbors. If you do not fear God this morning as God would have you to, then come to

Jesus, and trust Him to put that fear in your heart. If you continue to take His Word and will for your life lightly, you will surely perish. But if you embrace Him in whole-hearted obedience, then you will find life.

- n. And you see, true wisdom and knowledge begins here with the fear of the Lord, for if you do not fear Him and turn from your sins, then in the end you will be the greatest fool. For you will have traded the beauty of God, the glory of Christ, and the true riches of heaven, for the miseries of Hell. To fear Him is to put your feet on the path of the knowledge of God, and to walk on it unswervingly for the rest of your life. But if you turn away from Him, and will not fear Him, you may try and do all that Solomon exhorts you to do in his book, and yet still be cast into the furnace in the end.
- o. People of God, fear the Lord. If you do not fear Him, you will not prosper in the end. But if you fear Him, then your feet will be on the path of life, and you will enter into heaven by the grace of Christ. Therefore, fear the Lord and live. Amen.