

Tea Tree Gully Community Church

The Fear of the Lord

Psalm 33:8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him.

Preamble

Early this year God got my attention, regarding this topic.

Several times over a week or so I said “Lord, what do you want me to read today in your word?”

Day 1 Genesis 3

Disobedience and fall of mankind.

Day 2 Exodus 8

Middle of the plagues in Egypt, Pharaoh’s heart hardened towards God.

Day 3 Leviticus 16 & 10

Death of Nadab and Abihu (Aaron’s sons) after offering unauthorized fire. Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them.

(And later also, Numbers 14 & 16, grumbling and Korah’s rebellion)

Not long after this I happened to watch a message by John Bevere speaking about the Awe of God – or the Fear of the Lord. All three of these situations were mentioned in this one message. Amazing!

Each of these instances displays a lack of fear of the Lord, or Holy Fear. There were dire consequences in each case.

Note: John Bevere has released a book titled *The Awe of God*, which I waited months for to become available and order. Subsequently we have purchased copies for distribution to those who are interested.

I will draw on some thoughts from this and from a message on the same topic I presented 9 years ago (May 2014) which is important to revisit.

The Church has focused on God’s love and grace to the neglect of holiness and godly fear and awe.

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**

Note: We did a three-week series on Judgment in March 2023 and also covered it in the Foundations course mid-year.

Introduction

We live in the New Testament age of grace. (NIV OT grace 8 times, NT 116 times). It's not that God's character or disposition towards mankind has changed from OT to NT but we who live on this side of the cross have available to us all of the benefits ushered into this age through Christ and the finished work of the cross.

.. the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 3:4-6**

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **John 1:16-17**

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. **Romans 5:1-2**

God's grace is a wonderful thing. Two of God's attributes are that he is gracious and merciful. He is a gracious God and a merciful God. However, grace and mercy have no meaning to us in isolation. Where there is no wrongdoing there is no need for mercy. Where there is no lack of deservedness there is no need or requirement for grace to be demonstrated.

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8**

Grace and mercy are aspects of God's perfect sacrificial (agape) love. Grace and mercy (and forgiveness) always costs somebody something.

Illustration: If I borrow something and break it and am forgiven, it costs the lender to extend grace and say you don't need to pay for it.

What has been made available to us through Christ, cost God very dearly.

God's grace towards us is more than a disposition of graciousness. It is enabling power and provision expressed and applied in numerous ways – saving grace, sustaining grace. Grace to stand, to serve, to heal, to change and so much more.

Let us then approach the throne of mercy and grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. **Hebrews 4:16**

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. **Titus 3:4-7**

A commonly used phrase says:

**Mercy is not getting what we do deserve and
Grace is getting what we don't deserve.**

What is the purpose of God's grace towards us?

We need to understand the true plan of salvation that God has for us.

Salvation is not a ticket to heaven or an escape pass from hell.

Salvation is much broader and more comprehensive than that. Salvation is the plan for total redemption of a human being – spirit, soul and body. It is a complete remedy to the impact of a degenerative sin ridden state on each of these parts of a human being, which ultimately leads to complete destruction; of the body (physical death), of the soul (disintegration into total depravity and self-destruction), of the spirit (dead and separated from God).

(we) are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. **Romans 3:24**

Jesus came to destroy the work of Satan, proclaim truth, and to save people from their sin (sinful state that ultimately destroys, manifesting with sins)

Once more Jesus said to them (Pharisees), "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come." **John 8:21**

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." **Matthew 1:21**

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.
Romans 6:22

In God's graciousness he has intervened (while we were still sinners, **Romans 5:8**) to provide a way to redeem - make good again our position/state (e.g. we talk about 'redeeming' a situation). This includes both the legal event of justification and the refining process of sanctification. The first includes the imputed righteousness of Christ to us, the second is the behavioural righteousness of holy living (good works).

Of course, refusing this opportunity (and insulting or outraging the Spirit of Grace, **Hebrews 10:29**) will ultimately bring punitive judgement to those who don't want God and they will have their way, but will suffer without hope eternally because of it..

However, regarding the broader more comprehensive, correct definition of salvation involving total redemption of the whole person - many 'Christians' don't live with this in mind, or don't want to embrace it.

This is where grace is often abused.

Distortion and abuse of Grace

As can happen so readily, man goes to extremes when what is required is a balanced perspective given by the whole counsel of God as enabled by the Holy Spirit.

For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (Ephesian Elders). Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! **Acts 20:27-31**

The whole aspect of grace has been distorted and abused in some spheres of Christian teaching. Terms such as *cheap grace* and *hypergrace* have been coined to describe teaching that promotes wrong or imbalanced teaching about how we should respond to God's grace.

Quote: excerpt from www.GotQuestions.org What is cheap grace?

The term “cheap grace” can be traced back to a book written by German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, called *The Cost of Discipleship*, published in 1937. In that book, Bonhoeffer defined “cheap grace” as “the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.” The emphasis is on the benefits of Christianity without the costs involved; hence, the adjective *cheap* to describe it.

The idea of carnal Christianity essentially teaches that as long as one makes a profession of faith in Christ, he or she is saved (Romans 10:9), even if there is no immediate obedience to the commands of Jesus and the apostles to live a life of holiness. It is the idea that we can have Jesus as Savior, but not necessarily as Lord. People who advocate for carnal Christianity, or “free grace” as it’s often called, do not deny the necessity of good works (i.e., holy living) for sanctification, but they distinguish the call for salvation from the call to sanctification (or discipleship).

What the proponents of Lordship Salvation assert is that salvation is a call to discipleship, that one cannot have Jesus as Savior without also acknowledging Him as Lord.

Cheap grace seeks to hide the cost of discipleship from people. It seeks to claim that as long as we make a profession of faith, we are saved.

We are not saved by a profession of faith (alone). We are not saved by praying the Sinner’s Prayer (alone). We are not saved by signing a card or walking an aisle. We are saved by a living and active faith (James 2:14-26), a faith that manifests itself in repentance, obedience and love of God and our neighbor. Salvation is not (just) a transaction; it’s a transformation.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/cheap-grace.html>

Quote: excerpt from www.GotQuestions.org What is hyper-grace?

The term *hyper-grace* has been used to describe ... teaching that emphasizes the grace of God to the exclusion of other vital teachings such as repentance and confession of sin.

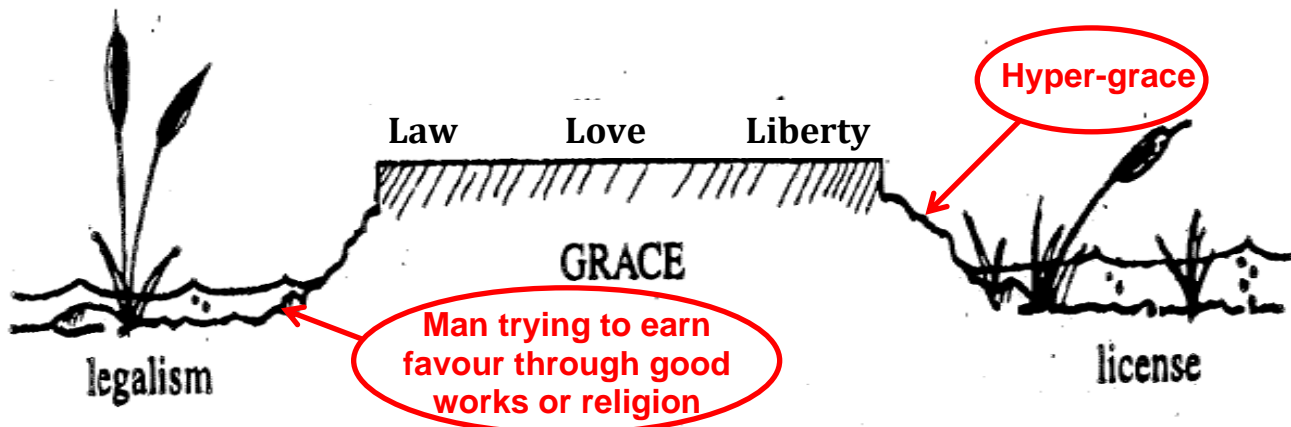
...much of what the hyper-grace preachers teach is valid. We are indeed saved by grace, not our works (Ephesians 2:8-9). And God’s grace is marvelous, great, and free (1 Timothy 1:14). However, hyper-grace teaching is

out of proportion to the rest of Scripture. Any time one doctrine is emphasized to the exclusion of the rest, we fall into error because we fail to “correctly handle” the Word (2 Timothy 2:15).

<http://www.gotquestions.org/hyper-grace.html>

Grace in balance

The Road of Grace



Gal 5:4

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace

Gal 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free... do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Gal 5:13

You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature.

Regarding legalism (which is ignoring grace):

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9

Regarding license (which is abusing grace):

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know

Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **Ephesians 4:17-22**

Regarding freedom in grace:

to be made new in the attitude of your minds; **Ephesians 4:23**

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **Ephesians 4:30**

continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, **Philippians 2:12**

In essence, aberrations on sound doctrine regarding grace (cheap grace, carnal Christianity, hyper-grace) detract from the real purpose of grace.

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to (renounce - ESV) ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age **Titus 2:11-12**

or

Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you towards repentance? **Romans 2:4**

Question: What is it that keeps us from responding wrongly to God’s grace?
What keeps us from veering into the bondage of legalism or derailing into the destruction of license (lawlessness, cheap grace etc)?

We could say, it can include gratefulness, love, understanding of our need for continuing growth in God using his yardstick of holiness - rather than comparing ourselves to ourselves or others. But, although they shouldn’t, these things can wain over time at times because, as Paul says:

I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. **Romans 7:21**

The enduring quality we need is this:

Answer: The Fear of the Lord

The man who fears God will avoid all extremes. **Ecclesiastes 7:18**

Nehemiah 1:11 speaks of servants of the Lord who delight in revering your name.

The answer to ignoring grace (legalism) or abusing grace (license, hyper-grace, cheap grace) is the fear of the Lord.

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 245.

We cannot separate the true grace of God from the holy fear of God. They are united and both *teach* - continually counsel us away from the traps of death.

Quote: William Booth – founder of Salvation Army 1878

The chief danger of the 20th century will be:

Religion without the Holy Spirit
Christianity without Christ
Forgiveness without repentance
Salvation without regeneration
Politics without God
Heaven without hell

This describes so called ‘Progressive Christianity’ (covered November 2022).

Story: The testimony of a high profile and influential tele evangelist of the late 1980’s. Chapter 17 The Awe of God.

Visited in jail by John Bevere, after being prosecuted for mail fraud (he had also committed adultery seven years before). Asked by John when his love for Jesus grew cold, what happened, he answered that he had always loved Jesus but that he hadn’t feared God.

(Note: a faulty definition of loving Jesus who said, “if you love me, you will do what I command”.)

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 245.

Our broadly accepted Western gospel has systematically removed the fear of God from our hearts by teaching a counterfeit grace that trains us differently than God’s wisdom. It creates an unhealthy fountain of perverted counsel that removes the restraining force from protecting us from sin.

Presently in our society, the force of lawlessness is on an accelerated pace. If the widely accepted counterfeit grace continues to eliminate holy fear from believers’ hearts, multitudes of professing Christians will be swept away by lawlessness’ deception. We need a revival of holy fear, for it continually protects us from being fooled. It keeps our hearts in line with truth, even when the majority have fallen headlong into deception.

New Testament Scriptures (some) regarding the Fear of the Lord (Holy Fear)

continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling (5401 phobou)
Philippians 2:12

since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that defiles body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (5401 phobo).
2 Corinthians 7:1

Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear (5401 phobo). **1 Peter 1:17**

Defining the Fear of the Lord

Right from the outset we need to understand that Holy Fear is a good and healthy thing that carries many benefits (that we will cover later). It also enhances rather than detracts from our relationship with God.

The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them **Psalms 25:14 (NIV)**

The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. **(ESV)**

To properly appreciate the Fear of the Lord, we need to understand what it is and what it isn't.

For the unbeliever, there is the fear, or terror of the judgment of God and eternal death.

"I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.
Luke 12:4-6

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. **Hebrews 10:31**

Definitions of fear:

A feeling of anxiety and agitation produced by the presence or nearness of danger, evil or pain. Webster's dictionary

An unpleasant, often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger, reason for alarm. The Penguin English dictionary.

We would associate this type of feeling when confronted with a violent situation, or a threat of some sort to our wellbeing or safety etc.

For the believer, the fear of the Lord is something different.

‘God is to be feared but he is not a God of fear’

For God did not give us a spirit of fear (1167 deilias) (timidity, cowardice) but of power, love and sound mind (sound judgment, self-control, self discipline)
2 Timothy 1:7 (various versions)(This is not talking about not having Holy Fear)

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear (5401 phobon, alarm, terror, fear) but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." **Romans 8:15**

There is no fear (5401 phobos) in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.
1 John 4:18

Note: The root Greek word (Strong's 5401) grammatically expressed as phobos, phobon, phobou etc. has three different meanings, nuances:

1. Fear, terror, alarm
2. The object or cause of fear
3. Reverence, respect

Those who know Christ do not live in fear of God's condemnation. Instead, they have (or can have) a more confident view of God based on His love for them.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." **Hebrews 12:28-29**

Note: Reverence and awe are not the same thing. We may look into the night sky and be filled with awe of the vastness of it but we don't reverence it.

This reverence and awe is exactly what the Fear of the Lord means for Christians.

Awareness of his holiness, that he is Righteous Judge, a consuming fire and just plain awesome is all part of this.

Aside: The word awesome has been devalued, perverted just like so many other words e.g. sick (good), wicked (great) awesome (fantastic) etc. A bowl of great tasting ice cream is not awesome!

Literally we are to be awed and humbled by his presence and fearful lest we should invoke his displeasure by wrong living. It is a healthy sense of 'holy' fear.

'We must fear God out of love, not love Him out of fear'

Saint Francis De Sales

For the believer it includes understanding how much God hates sin, fearing his discipline (as compared to punitive judgment / punishment) even as believers. Hebrews describes God's discipline for the believer, motivated by love:

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises (speaks of parental correction and discipline) (other versions say, 'punishes' not so accurate for a lot of situations. cf however there can be consequences of disobedience e.g. Moses excluded from entering the promised land) **every son whom he receives.**" It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:5-11 (ESV)

As children, the fear of discipline from parents no doubt prevented some evil actions. The same should be true in our relationship with God. We should fear his discipline, and therefore seek to live our lives in such a way that pleases him.

This should be the motivating factor in our surrender, obedience and even our confidence in God – he is all powerful, Sovereign, Creator of all. His perfect love desires our best.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear (3373 reverent fear) him; **Psalms 103:11**

What does it mean to walk in the fear of the Lord?

Question: If we fear the Lord correctly how should that impact the way we live?
What does it look like? What does it involve?

When we truly fear the Lord, we will recognize that He is the Creator, and we are the creatures. He is the Master, and we are the servants. He is the Father, and we are the children.

There are two major areas that encompass us manifesting the fear of the Lord:

1. To tremble at His Word

“These are the ones I look on with favor (bless): those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word. **Isaiah 66:2**

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in his commandments **Psalm 112:1**

2. To tremble at His presence

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all those around Him. **Psalm 89:7**

To tremble at his word

This disposition will be manifested in us holding God's Word in the place of highest importance as our guide for living. Genuine fear of the Lord always means obedience to God's Word.

We will want to please Him at all costs, realizing the consequences of disobedience.

To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behaviour and perverse speech. **Proverbs 8:13** (attitudes, behaviour, speech)

If we don't hate evil, we don't fear the Lord. People who do not walk in line with God's Word do not fear the Lord, regardless of what they profess with their lips. If we fear the Lord, then his will and Word are more important than anything else and our desire is to please him.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what

he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it - not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it - they will be blessed in what they do. **James 1:22-25**

Added to this we will grow in sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and responsiveness and obedience to his convicting and directing voice in our lives – as is the exhortation in **Galatians 5**, to live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit.

The opposite of this is also true, that if we ignore, resist, neglect the Word and the Spirit our consciences will be dulled. The Bible talks about a seared conscience:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have shipwrecked their faith. **1 Timothy 1:19**

Note: John Bevere expands on aspects of obedience in his book The Awe of God. (Bring clarification re immediate obedience).

To tremble at His presence

Q: How do we come into God's presence? (both individually and corporately)

King David said:

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

Though there is acknowledgment of God's love and the opportunity to approach him there is no air of familiarity.

Our Father (relationship) who is in heaven, hallowed be your name (may your holy name be honoured) **Matthew 6:9** (Unpack)

Q: How do we behold the Lord our God? (note msg presented June 2023)

The One who made the cosmos, who paid for our sins, who is a consuming Holy fire has called us into fellowship with Him. All these things need to be real to us, not just familiar concepts, held in tension and change us as we behold him in his word and by his Spirit.

Q: Do we come prepared to worship corporately? Is it with coffee cup in hand or with a heart pre-prepared to meet with him in worship and in the word? Are we engaged when we are here?

Story: The Awe of God, by John Bevere, chapters 4-5 & chapter 9 page 55
A gathering reprimanded for their lack of reverence towards God, repent and experience several waves of God's presence (different manifestations)

Read from top of pg. 23 to mid pg. 24, parts of pg. 28.

Note: God's presence can manifest in different ways – peace, refreshment, weighty presence (kabod) and more.

Share: My experiences – refreshment (lasting a couple of days)
- liquid warmth in prayer closet
- kabod – stood very still, did not move, alone in the chapel

Q: If this can be the experiences of an individual between seasons of the move of God, what can be the corporate experience when God moves?

Trembling at God's Word and his presence has a direct, positive, healthy, impact on our disposition and behaviour in living in holy fear.

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 66

Our salvation is not worked out with love and kindness, rather with fear and trembling. (Referring to [Philippians 2:12](#))

This has implications for life now with all of the possible good or bad consequences of decision making and priorities as well as eternally.

By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil [Proverbs 16:6](#)

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 68

We cannot do anything to make God love us more or less, but we are responsible for how pleased He is with us.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat (Bema) of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body,

whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. **2 Corinthians 5:10-11**

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 83

The decisions Jesus makes over each of us at the judgement seat are eternal...there will never be any changes, revisions, or alterations made to his pronouncements. What we do with the cross determines *where* we spend eternity, however, the way we live as believers determines *how* we will live in the forever. (regarding loss and reward).

Things that compromise the Fear of the Lord

A dulled or seared conscience is the result of compromise – continual neglect, resistance to obey and refusing to respond to conscience and the Holy Spirit.

To a greater or lesser degree holy fear is replaced by irreverence of some type.

These three things can cause compromise:

Fear of man

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe. **Proverbs 29:25**

Quote: The remarkable thing about fearing God is that, when you fear God, you fear nothing else; whereas, if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.
Oswald Chambers

Fear of man and fear of God are largely mutually exclusive.

An attitude of entitlement

A trap especially for longer term believers and leaders.
Having served God for a long time the Enemy sows seeds of self-assessment that they are more entitled because of what they have done. Corners get cut, excuses get made, integrity may suffer, a shift occurs from holy fear to some degree of entitlement that causes these things.

We need to remind ourselves of these things:

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. **1 Corinthians 6:20a**

in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual (reasonable) act of worship **Romans 12:1**

Familiarity

This can include devaluing the things of God, not taking God seriously, and abusing grace – and the 'grace gap'.

The grace gap is delayed judgment not denied judgment, when we don't respond.

Delayed judgment does not mean it doesn't matter. It's easy to slip into the deception of "God isn't watching" or "it's OK".

What sorrow awaits those who try to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their evil deeds in the dark! "The LORD can't see us," they say. "He doesn't know what's going on!" **Isa 29:15 (NLT)**

The lack of the fear of the Lord in someone's life has a similar outworking to the well know phrase 'familiarity breeds contempt':

Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison. When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. The LORD will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. The LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law. **Deuteronomy 29:18-21**
(Unpack - personal and corporate defilement)

Even with the manifest presence of God, familiarity can become a problem.
(See the next section on those who lacked holy fear)

Holy fear is the antidote to familiarity and irreverence.

By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil **Proverbs 16:6**

Examples of those who lacked a fear of the Lord

Nadab and Abihu [Leviticus 10](#)

In familiarity they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord and fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them – burnt them alive.

Eli and his sons Hophni and Phineas [1 Samuel 2:12-36](#)

Sons were wicked, had no regard for the Lord ([v12](#))

Treated the Lord's offering with contempt ([v17](#))

Committed adultery with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of meeting (Tabernacle) – place of worship! ([v22](#))

Note: [1 Samuel 4:19-22](#) wife of Phinehas named son Ichabod for the glory (kabod) has departed from Israel – the Ark of God captured by the Philistines

Israel

The glory departed the temple and the city. (ichabod – the glory has departed)

[Ezekiel 10:4](#) – from above the Ark cherubim

[Ezekiel 10:18](#) – from over the temple threshold.

[Ezekiel 11:22](#) – from within the city.

Ananias and Saphira [Acts 5](#)

They showed irreverence, lying before the Holy Spirit for selfish reasons of personal kudos seeking, promoting a false image. God's judgment was pronounced and they dropped dead.

Remember, it was only shortly before that, at Pentecost that God's manifest presence was made known in a different way to this - wonder, amazement and joy.

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 56

The greater God's manifest glory, the greater and swifter the judgment of irreverence

The presence of God that executes judgment brings about a renewed fear of the Lord. – **great fear** (phobos – probably both nuances of terror, alarm, fear and reverent awe) **came upon the whole Church and all who heard about these events.** [Acts 5:11](#)

Judgement (divine adjustment) beginning at the household of God ([1 Peter 4:17](#))
- both personal (first in private and then in public) and corporate cleansing.

The ultimate results of a lack of the fear of the Lord?

In addition to a seared conscience, there are several scriptures that talk about the ultimate consequences of a lack of holy fear.

Pride, lack of self-awareness, wilfully disobedient, given intentionally to evil.

... concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin. The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. Even on his bed he plots evil (active, wilful sin); he commits himself to a sinful course and does not reject what is wrong. **Psalm 36:1-4**

Denial and rejection of God leading to depravity and deception.

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." (the response) They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; (the result) **Psalm 14:1 & 53:1**

From **Romans 1**

The godless and wicked who suppress the truth by their wickedness, becoming futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts darkened, though claiming to be wise, given over to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done, inventing ways of doing evil.

It often also results in shortened life span by way of reaping what you sow to destruction and, for the believer, the possibility of 'Plan C' judgment – forfeiting one's life and loss of further opportunity to gain eternal rewards and glorify God (see three week message on Judgment March 2023).

Examples of those who did fear the Lord

Jesus – the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him. He delighted in the fear of the Lord.

The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him – the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord – and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.
Isaiah 11:2-3

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." **Luke 22:42** (a practical demonstration)

Job – described as, no one on earth like him, he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. **Job 1:8**

Following times of feasting by his sons and daughters Job would offer burnt offerings on behalf of his children just in case they had sinned.

The **Early Church believers** who saw the firsthand power and presence of God.

Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles **Acts 2:43** (following Pentecost)

Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events **Acts 5:11** (following judgment on Ananias and Sapphira)

The church was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, and grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord **Acts 9:31**
(following Paul's conversion and transformation witnessed by other believers)

Isaiah – He had a firsthand supernatural encounter with the glory of God **Isaiah 6:1-5**

...I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs...calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory". At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King the Lord Almighty." **Isaiah 6:1-5**

Simeon – a righteous and devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel, heard from and guided by the Holy Spirit (**Luke 2:2-27**).

John the Baptist – Speaking of Jesus, he said: **He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."** **John 1:27**

How do we get the Fear of the Lord?

The fear of the Lord is taught and caught.

The fear of the Lord is taught as we are instructed in the ways of the Lord by those that input us and by the direct action of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
Psalms 34:11 (head)

Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. **Psalm 86:11** (heart)

It is also caught by keeping company with those who fear the Lord and lead a godly life by example.

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. **Proverbs 27:17**

Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name. 'They will be mine,' says the Lord Almighty **Malachi 3:16-17a**

Unpack: Context of previous few verses – encouragement, preoccupation, with the things of God.

God listened and heard – took notice, not casually but recorded, written down, those that feared the Lord.

A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. **Proverbs 12:26**

A warning regarding the negative side of this principle:

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."
1 Corinthians 15:33

The fear of the Lord also comes through supernatural encounters and experiencing the power of God's presence, as was Isaiah's experience. Though experiences may have a long-lasting impact, they are no guarantee (e.g. Nadab and Abihu who served as priests in the Tabernacle where there was the constant manifest presence of the Lord) since it is an enduring issue of the heart.

We can also ask for the fear of the Lord to be instilled within us by God.

Transformation – positional and behavioural holiness (purity)

There are many benefits that flow as a result of living in the fear of the Lord. But there is no point focussing on these at the neglect of actually becoming preoccupied with, and living in, holy fear.

While the many benefits of the fear of the Lord may be attractive, the motivation should not be these but an innate desire to do what is right for its own sake – to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**).

King David delighted in the things of God saying:

Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long

Psalm 25:4-5

We see similar sentiments in the first Psalm:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight (preoccupation) is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1:1-2

Jesus delighted in the fear of the Lord for its own sake.

**Salvation is not just an event of transaction; it's also
a process of transformation.**

There is a big difference between positional righteousness (and holiness) and behavioural righteousness and holiness.

We have the imputed righteousness of Christ, having been justified by faith (**Romans 5:1**) and we can do nothing to earn this; it is by grace through faith – gift of God, not by works (**Ephesians 2:8**).

This of necessity must come first, but does not replace behavioural righteousness and holy living.

We are called to be holy because God is holy (**1 Peter 1:16**), to repent of dead works (**Hebrews 6:1**), to do good works prepared in advance for us to do (**Ephesians 2:10**), to be trained in righteousness to share in God's holiness (**Hebrews 12:10-11**) and individually and corporately as the Bride of Christ to be self-prepared through acts of righteousness (righteous living) for the wedding of the Lamb (**Revelation 19:7-8**).

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (ESV) (the process of being refined in behavioural holiness)

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” **1 Peter 1:14-16**
(Addressing behavioural not positional holiness)

Again we come to:

continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to (will) desire and to work for His good pleasure (purpose). **Philippians 2:12b-13**

The fear of the Lord motivates us to will (gives us the desire), and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ enables us to do (empowers us).

Grace empowers us to live holy lives.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. **1 Peter 1:2-3a**

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 116

It's a work of God's grace, but we must cooperate with the power he gives both to will and to do. Holy fear and trembling ignite and position us to be empowered by his grace for obedience.

The simple equation is this:

Motivated by Holy fear, we by faith, access, apprehend grace (divine empowerment) for change.

The purpose of grace is realized when we are motivated by the Fear of the Lord, rather than ignoring grace (legalism) or abusing grace (license).

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 118

Read bottom half of page 118 re sinful living.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality (and any other sin); that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. **1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 & 7-8**

Quote: John Bevere, The Awe of God pg. 123 & 124.

The holiness we pursue must originate in our hearts – our thoughts, motives, and intentions. This will ultimately drive our outward behaviour. It's not enough to have an outward form of godliness but deny the power of the transformation of our inward desires (from holy fear). We must long for truth in our inward parts as God does (**Psalm 51:6**).

We can only purify our hearts by embracing the fear of the Lord, which drives us to pursue authentic holiness (from within).

Song words: Refiner's Fire (by Brian Doerkson)

Purify my heart, let me be as gold and precious silver,
Purify my heart, let me be as gold, pure gold.
Refiners fire, my hearts one desire is to be holy set apart for you Lord.
I choose to be holy, set apart for you my master.
Ready to do your will.

The fear of the Lord is pure, and it purifies.

The fear of the LORD is pure (clean), enduring forever. **Psalm 19:9**

**True holiness is a transcendent, consecrated purity; one that opens
the door to deep intimacy with God**

John Bevere, The Awe of God

Whoever loves a pure heart and gracious speech will have the king as a friend.
Proverbs 22:11 (NLT)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. **Matthew 5:8**

Pursue ... holiness, without which no one will see the Lord **Hebrews 12:14**

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself (manifest) to them." **John 14:21**

Conclusion – for first three weeks

Will do a fourth week on various benefits of the fear of the Lord, but we can't focus on this until we become preoccupied with desiring and looking to actually live in Holy Fear (let people ponder, digest, linger and respond over next few weeks).

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear (awe, fear of the Lord). For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed (the purpose of God's grace, salvation for the whole person spirit, soul, body) from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, (free but not cheap grace) a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake (God's sacrificial love). Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. **1 Peter 1:17-21**

The Benefits and Blessings of the Fear of the Lord

The first thing we need to note is that the blessings and benefits are a by-product, an outworking, a consequence of walking in the Fear of the Lord. That may seem to be a logical statement, but our enduring motivation can't be primarily to pursue the Fear of the Lord for the benefits associated with it, but for its own sake – though our initial concern and desire may be for the benefits as we realise our need for them.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalms 19:7-11

Isaiah 11:3 His delight will be in the fear of the Lord (for its own sake not in the benefits of it). This is a heart level issue of loving God and wanting to honour him – the result of a heart aligned with his.

I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart. **Psalm 40:8**

We must long for truth in our inward parts as God does (**Psalm 51:6**). This is a genuine transformative work of the Holy Spirit with in us.

Illustrations: Gardening – love of it vs just the results – although there is a link.

Footy – follow the process and the results will take care of themselves.

Examples: David - delighting in the law of the Lord

Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. **Psalm 25:4-5**

Moses – show me (teach me) your ways that I may know you and find favour in your sight **Exodus 33:13 (& Psalm 103:7)**
(not just your acts of power which the Israelites observed from a detached position, though firsthand observers.

Note: This is important in a move of God – expand.

The benefits, out workings, blessings, of the fear of the Lord are many and varied and carry great promise. A simple search throughout the Psalms and Proverbs quickly highlights this truth.

One way to look at them is according to the following five points:

1. Intimacy with God – depth of fellowship, friendship, deep relationship

We are the ones who determine how close, or our level of intimacy with God, not God. That is a challenging thought. God puts no limits on it. We do.

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you **James 4:8**

The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. **Psalm 25:14 BSB**

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him **KJV**

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him **ESV**

God is not everyone's friend in the church in the fullest sense, but to those who fear him he shares, reveals, makes known his covenant and ways. God doesn't

share everything with everyone. We as believers are equally loved but not equally favoured. That depends on us.

Note: The different circle of 'friends' of Jesus – followers, 72, 12, 3, 1

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowing God intimately and his ways.

The opposite is mentioned in **Matthew 7:23** where it says, "I never knew you... who practice lawlessness", i.e. of a different heart.

It's about knowing the real God, not the God of our imagination or a counterfeit – a different God.

Friendship with God is costly. It demands obedience, trust, priority, alignment of values and priorities.

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in (obeying) His commandments. **Psalm 112:1**

You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I call you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.
John 15:14-15

Question: Are we about Father's business, or our own?

Note: Prophetic word given Sunday (17/9/23) by Samuel Ting.

Make something small into something great. Explosion.
Removing the yeast (of compromise, sin, defilement).
It will cost people.

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

2. Fearlessness

Quote: Men who fear God face life fearlessly. Men who do not fear God end up fearing everything. Richard Halverson, pg. 228 The Awe of God

There is a freedom in the courage and boldness that comes from resting solely in God's approval, provision and protection.

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe. **Proverbs 29:25**

3. Quantity of life (Long Life)

The fear of the Lord prolongs life. It applies to life in general, our walk with the Lord and ministry. The opposite is also true – bad choices, foolishness and evil will curtail or impact negatively on these things.

The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked are cut short **Proverbs 10:27**

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death. **Proverbs 14:27**

For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. **Proverbs 9:11**

4. Quality of Life

Wisdom

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. **Psalms 111:10**

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. **Proverbs 1:7**

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. **Proverbs 9:10** (Also **Proverbs 15:33** and see **Job 28:28**)

Quote: In essence there is no lasting wisdom outside of the fear of the Lord. Holy fear is the origin of enduring wisdom, but the benefit continues beyond the starting point. John Bevere, pg. 242 The Awe of God

Value wisdom, get wisdom! – that's a Biblical exhortation.

Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare 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; those who hold her fast will be blessed. **Proverbs 3:13-18**

Wisdom is supreme; so acquire wisdom. **Proverbs 4:7a**

Note: Different types of wisdom – godly, worldly, demonic.

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. **James 3:15**

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. **Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25**

That's why the fear of the Lord prolongs life, because it is the beginning of wisdom.

For those who find me find life and receive favor from the LORD. But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death. **Proverbs 8:35-36**

Guidance and Instruction

Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. **Psalm 25:12**

But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, **Psalm 33:18**

Quote: We cannot separate the true grace of God from the holy fear of God. They are united and both teach – continually counsel us away from the traps of death. John Bevere, pg. 245 The Awe of God

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye upon you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him. **Psalm 32:8-10**

Favour and Fruitfulness

The fear of the Lord brings great blessing.

The rewards of humility and the fear of the LORD are wealth and honor and life. **Proverbs 22:4**

Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him (walk in his ways). You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. In this way indeed shall blessing come to the man who fears the LORD. **Psalm 128:1-4** (An ordered, fruitful, harmonious life & healthy relationships).

Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. **Psalm 34:9**

He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. **Psalm 145:19**

Protection

The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. **Psalm 34:7**

The fear of the LORD leads to life, that one may rest content, without visitation from harm. **Proverbs 19:23**

General blessing

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; **Psalm 103:11**

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; **Psalm 103:13**

Cleanses

The fear of the Lord motivates people to holiness. We can only purify our hearts by embracing the fear of the Lord, which drives us to pursue authentic holiness (from within).

by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil. **Proverbs 16:6b**

Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. **Proverbs 3:7**

See also **Galatians 5** that exhorts us to live by the Spirit, walk by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the flesh, the sinful nature.

Bears a good witness

So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? **Nehemiah 5:9 (&15)**

See also, **Colossians 4:5-6, 1 Peter 3:15-16** and **Matthew 5:16**).

Salvation (change, transformation, rescue)

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. **Psalm 85:9**

Security

The fear of the Lord produces a sense of security.

In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. **Proverbs 14:26**

See also the promises and blessings of **Psalm 91**.

Joy and strength

The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. **Psalm 147:11**

If the Lord delights in us we can know the succession of righteousness, peace and joy (**Romans 14:17**).

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in (obeying) His commandments. **Psalm 112:1**

..the joy of the Lord is your strength **Nehemiah 8:10**

Finishing well (finishing strong, remaining faithful)

Isaiah 40:31, Jude 24, 1 Corinthians 1:8, John 15:5, Micah 6:8

5. Legacy and Influence

We would all like to leave some legacy, but how are we living now to make that happen?

But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children **Psalm 103:17**
(Generational benefits)

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in (obeying) His commandments. His descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. **Psalm 112:1-2**

Questions: What type of legacy do we want to leave? Do we think about it?
What are we doing about it in how we live? How are we building?

Example: Max Dukes v Jonathan Edwards

Atheist Max Dukes

Lived an ungodly life. He married an ungodly girl and from this union:

310 died as paupers

150 were criminals

7 were murderers

100 were drunkards

More than half the women were prostitutes

His 540 descendants cost the state more than 1.25 million dollars

Evangelist Jonathon Edwards

Lived the same time as Jukes but married a godly girl. Of his 1,394 descendants:

100 preachers and missionaries

13 became college presidents

65 college professors

3 U.S. senators and 1 V.P.

30 Judges and 100 lawyers

60 physicians

75 army and navy officers

60 prominent authors

295 college graduates

Some were governors of states

80 public officials in other capacities

His descendants cost the state nothing

The best answer to significantly reducing the social welfare budget is godly living.

Conclusion (Final words of exhortation and encouragement)

Read: **Proverbs 2:1-6** (An exhortation)

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with 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. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. **Proverbs 2:1-6**

Regarding finishing strong and not falling away:

Now to Him (be glory) who is able to keep you from stumbling (from falling away) and to present you (faultless) unblemished before the presence of his glory, with (exceeding) great joy **Jude 24**

He will sustain (keep) you to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **1 Corinthians 1:8**