

1. Ours is a society that is often ruled by fear
 - a. For example
 - i. Fear of what people think of us
 - ii. Fear of how we appear
 - iii. Fear of our health
 - iv. Fear of terrorists
 - v. Fear of societal collapse
 - vi. Fear of a virus
 - vii. Fear of climate change
 - b. Despite many of these fears, many places in our world are safer and more comfortable than ever in history
 - c. And we saw during the covid experiment that if you can make enough people fear, you can control them; they will abandon basic freedoms, submit to Pharoah, and (during other times in history) even be willing to destroy those who they think are a source of their fears
 - d. Part of the reason for this pandemic of fear is b/c our world has turned from God and refused to fear him as the fitting object of our fear and reverence
 - e. Michael Reeves has observed that secularism and atheism lobbied to liberate culture from, what they viewed, the enslaving fear of God. They proposed that doing so will result in human liberation. "But throwing off the fear of God has not made our society happier and less fretful. Quite the opposite."¹

"Where discomfort was once considered quite normal (and quite proper for certain situations), it is now deemed an essentially unhealthy thing. It means that in a culture awash with anxiety, fear is increasingly seen as wholly negative. And Christians have been swept along, adopting society's negative assessment of all fear. Small wonder, then, that we shy away from talking about the fear of God, despite its prominence in

¹ Michael Reeves, *What Does it Mean to Fear the Lord?*, 17.

Scripture. It is understandable, but it is tragic: the loss of the fear of God is what ushered in our age of anxiety, but the fear of God is the very antidote to our fretfulness."²

- f. So, there is this pandemic of fear that plagues humanity; of misplaced fear; fearing the wrong things.
 - g. This is not to say that no attention or concern should be given to real world problems. There should be.
 - h. However, for the purpose of this study, misplaced fear; fearing the wrong thing, we will see, is an abandonment of God's kind of masculinity. To forsake the fear of God is to forsake masculinity.
2. Psalm 128 & Motivation to Masculinity & the Fear of God

Psalm 128 ¹ How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. ² When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. ³ Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. ⁴ Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD. ⁵ The LORD bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. ⁶ Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

- i. Notice, to whom this is addressed:
- ii. The Psalm mentions the chief spheres of masculinity: the man himself;
 - V. 2 - the man's work
 - V. 3a - the man's wife
 - V. 3b - the man's children

² Ibid., 18.

V. 5 - the corporate / body life of worship in which the man himself enthusiastically and humbly participates, and he leads his family to participate with also

V. 6 - and the man's legacy (grandchildren, the nation, the people of God), by God's grace

These are the spheres of life that God and his word see as chief for a man's concern. They are the areas of life where we most need God's blessing

- iii. V. 4 - A reminder statement, emphasizing that receiving this blessing hinges upon what the man does; his chief endeavor is above all this one thing: to fear the Lord
- iv. There are many things that the man cannot control: how people respond in his job; his kids' salvation.
- v. But he does not throw up his hands and say, "Well, God is sovereign," as if he is more spiritual than God.
- vi. The fear of God is the gateway to God's blessings
- vii. The psalm sees man and his great desire is to have his work, and home and home life be downstream of God's blessings; that he as a sinful man, would even so receive the blessing of God on him
- viii. One of a man's greatest desires and greatest struggles/battles:
 - 1) to have a job that is fulfilling, where God's blessing is upon him, and there is fruitfulness from it
 - 2) is to have such an influence on his family, and wife, that she would flourish in godliness, humility, and the dignity of biblical submission.

A man's discouragement in the home:

- ix. From the Psalm, what is it that he can consider working on so as to open the doors of his home, perhaps, wider to let God's blessings in?

Vv. 1, 4 - Fear the Lord

- x. So, How can we get traction to be the kind of men, by God's grace, that our jobs; our homes; our families; our churches; our towns; and our current and future wives would be downstream of God's blessings?

3. Defining the Fear of God

- a. What the fear of God is not

- i. It is not a crippling terror

1 John 4:18-19 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us.

****However, the fear of the Lord is a biblically informed awareness of God's judgment and wrath, along with his promise to discipline his redeemed (cf. Heb 12:5-11). We must not put the Lord our God to the test (Deut 6:16).**

- ii. It is not a fear that drives you away from God

The wrong fear of God will drive someone away from him; away from putting faith in Christ for salvation; away from receiving his forgiveness in Christ; away from repentance and trusting in Christ for peace with God.

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

iii. On balance, it is rational for those who refuse to put faith in Christ to be frightened of God (cf. Matt 24:30, Rev 16, Rev 19:11-19).

b. Exegetically

Proverbs 9:10 The **fear** of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

According to the *Dictionary of Biblical Languages*, the “fear” (יִרְאַת) of God carries the following ideas:

- **reverence**, fear, a state of piety and respect toward a superior
- **worship**, the act. or speech of showing profound reverence toward a superior, which may include ritual action
- **awesomeness**, that which causes wonder and astonishment

c. The fear of God implied

Much of what the fear of God comes down to:

- Masculinity means coming to terms with the fact that God is God and I am emphatically not.
- The man of God knows that he is not God.
- Much of manhood begins with embracing whole-heartedly that the God of the Bible alone is God.

d. The fear of God begun

- The fear of God begins at the cross
- The fear of God begins with making peace with God
- We must humbly submit to Christ as Lord and Savior as the first step in fearing God
- The fear of God begins with trusting in Christ, who lovingly propitiated the wrath of God at the cross for me, victoriously rose

bodily from the dead to ensure my justification, and rose back to heaven where he stands as our Mediator and High Priest

4. A Brief Consideration of the Fear of God from Scripture

- a. The love and goodness of God is motivation to fear him

Jeremiah 33:8-9 I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. ⁹ It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and **they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it.**

Hosea 3:5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, **and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.**

- b. Prayer and cries for help to God in need can be motivated by fearing him

Psalms 145:18-19 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. ¹⁹ He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.

- c. The fear of God is a delight to God's people

Nehemiah 1:11 "O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man."

- d. Exodus

The fear of Yahweh is a major theme in Exodus

- i. The fear of God motivated necessary disobedience to corrupt government; the fear of Pharaoh was overcome by a fear of God

Exodus 1:17, 21 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live...²¹

Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them.

Exodus 9:20 The one among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses

- ii. The power of God over his creation motivates fear and belief

Exodus 14:31 When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

- iii. The fear of God is an essential quality for spiritual leadership

Exodus 18:21 Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place *these* over them *as* leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.

- iv. The fear of God can grow through spiritual tests/trials & the fear of God is a deterrent from sin

Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."

e. Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy seemed to be Jesus' favorite book. It's essential to better understand Jesus and the NT

The fear of Yahweh is a major theme in the book

- i. The fear of God helps overcome fear of lesser things in life

Deuteronomy 1:28-30 'Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, "The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there." ' 29 "Then I said to you, 'Do not be shocked, nor

fear them. ³⁰ 'The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes

Deuteronomy 3:22 Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.

- ii. The fear of God will be the result of growing in the word of God

Deuteronomy 4:10 "Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, **that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live** on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

- iii. God greatly desires that we would fear him

Deuteronomy 5:29 Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!

- iv. Fearing God is motivation for obedience to God

Deuteronomy 6:2 that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

- v. Fear and worship are synonymous concepts

Deuteronomy 6:13 You shall fear *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

- vi. The fear of God is for our good

Deuteronomy 6:24 So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival, as *it is* today.

- vii. Fearing God is of great importance to God

Deuteronomy 10:12 Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul

- viii. Fearing God relates to serving him (what we fear, we serve)

Deuteronomy 10:20 You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.

- ix. Corporate celebrations were motivated by, and promoted, the fear of God

Deuteronomy 14:23 You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, **so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.**

- x. The fear of God is a critical trait for a political leader. Israel's political rulers were to read, write out, and obey the Bible so that they would fear God

Deuteronomy 17:19 It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes,

- xi. A lack of fearing God brought curses upon Israel

Deuteronomy 28:58-59 If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God, ⁵⁹ then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses.

- xii. The importance of all people, especially children, learning to fear the Lord (which came through learning his word)

Deuteronomy 31:12-13 Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, **so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law.** ¹³ **"Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God,** as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

f. Psalms

- i. All political and civil leaders are to fear God

Psalm 2:10–12 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. ¹¹ Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. ¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

g. The Proverbs

- i. God's kind of skill in living will begin with a reverence for him

Prov 9:10

All the situational wisdom in proverbs begins with the fear of God --- the wisdom in one's marriage; the wisdom taught about parenting and the rod of discipline - it is motivated by a fear of God - parents who forsake this do not fear God; the wisdom about finances, work, and doing hard things and self-discipline comes from a fear of God; the 35 or so verses about inviting criticism from godly believers comes from a fear of God

- ii. Those who do not invite criticism and who do not receive spiritual reproof are called fools, scoffers, and they do not fear God. Regardless of a person's profession of faith, if they cannot receive spiritual correction from other saints, they greatly lack in the fear of God.

Proverbs 15:12 A scoffer does not love one who reproves him, he will not go to the wise.

Proverbs 15:31–33 He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof Will dwell among the wise. ³² He who neglects discipline despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding. ³³ The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor *comes* humility.

- iii. Fearing the Lord is essential to humility and a proper low view of self

Proverbs 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

- iv. Those who fear the Lord will hate unrighteousness

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil

- v. Fearing God brings a proper God-centered boldness in God's ways

Proverbs 14:26 In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.

- vi. Fearing God is a restraint from sin

Proverbs 16:6 by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

- vii. Fearing God prevents sinful jealousy in our hearts

Proverbs 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, But *live* in the fear of the LORD always.

- viii. The Proverbs 31 woman—a humble, self-controlled, modest, and family-centered woman—all her virtue grows in the soil of fearing God

Proverbs 31:30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *but* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

h. Jeremiah

- i. God's created order and provision in creation should prompt fear and a heart that is quick to repent of sin

Jeremiah 5:22–25 'Do you not fear Me?' declares the LORD. 'Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it. ²³ 'But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; They have turned aside and departed. ²⁴ 'They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season, Both the autumn rain

and the spring rain, Who keeps for us The appointed weeks of the harvest." ²⁵ 'Your iniquities have turned these away, And your sins have withheld good from you.

- ii. The mandatory and rational response from all humanity is simply to fear the God of the Bible. Anything less is irrational and sin.

Jeremiah 10:6–8 There is none like You, O LORD; You are great, and great is Your name in might. ⁷ Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You. ⁸ But they are altogether stupid and foolish *In their* discipline of delusion – their idol is wood!

- i. Jesus and the Fear of God

- Jesus feared God the Father perfectly

Isaiah 11:1–3 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ² 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. ³ And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear

- Fear God, who controls our eternal destiny, over man, who, at best, can alter our temporal destiny

Matthew 10:28 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.

- j. Holiness and the fear of the Lord

2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

- k. Those who are perfected, glorified beings in heaven commend the fear of God

Revelation 14:7 and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

Revelation 15:4 "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED."

Revelation 19:5 And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."

5. The Fear of God as Man's Best Accountability

Stephen Charnock on the fear of God as man's chief "accountability partner":

- The fear of God seeing our actions must influence far more than man seeing them:

"When men will commit that in the presence of God which they would be afraid or ashamed to do before the eye of man, men do not practice that modesty before God as before men."

- When we fear what man will think of our actions, we often are less concerned with what God thinks:

"He that would restrain his tongue out of fear of men's eye, will not restrain either tongue or hands out of fear of God's."

- If the fear of God will not influence us out of sin and into holiness, but the fear of man will, we are scorning God and elevating man to a higher importance than him, thereby committing idolatry.

"Ask the thief why he dares to steal. Will he not answer, 'No eye sees him?' Ask the adulterer why he strips himself of chastity, and invades the rights of another. Will he not answer, 'No eye sees

me?" He disguiseth himself to be unseen by man, but slights the all-seeing eye of God.³

- Understanding the rank and greatness of God must solicit fear in us which motivates godliness.

"What man would do an unworthy action, or speak an unhandsome word, in the presence of his prince? The eye of the general inflames the spirit of a soldier. Why did David keep God's testimonies (Ps 119:168)? Because he considered that all his ways were before him; because he was persuaded his ways were present with God; God's precepts should be present with him. The same was the cause of Job's integrity (Job 31:4): "Doth he not see my ways?"

- The sincere life is one in which the fear of God, along with his omnipresent eye, is sufficient to sway our motivations, thoughts, actions, and deeds to honor Him:

"To have God in our eye is the way to be sincere."

- The true fear of God, so far from pushing us away from God, will always lead to fellowship with him:

"Communion with God consists chiefly in an ordering our ways as in the presence of him that is invisible. This would make us spiritual, raised and watchful in all our passions, if we considered that God is present with us in our shops, in our chambers, in our walks, and in our meetings, as present with us as with the angels in heaven; who, though they have a presence of glory above us, yet have not a greater measure of his essential presence than we have."

- A fresh diligence and zeal in the Christian life will be sustained by the fear of God:

"The actual thoughts of the presence of God is the life and spirit of all religion [genuine Christianity]. We could not have sluggish

³ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, 265.

spirits and a careless watch if we considered that his eye is upon us all the day.”

- The fear of God will keep our fears in proper perspective:

“If the presence of God be enough to strengthen against fear [lesser fears], then the prevailing of fear issues from our forgetfulness of it.”

6. Consequences of Not Fearing God

- Refusal to fear God is one of the chief evidences of sinful depravity

Romans 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes

- Those who entertain sin in their thoughts have no fear of God

Psalm 36:1 Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes.

- Those who have a high view of themselves and who praise themselves in their thoughts have no, or little, fear of God

Ps 36:1b-2 There is no fear of God before his eyes. ² For it flatters him in his *own* eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity *and* the hatred *of it*.

- No godly sorrow over sin results from no/little fear of God

Jer 44:10

- Those who will not receive spiritual reproof from others have little / no fear of God; those who are unteachable do not fear God

Proverbs 1:29 Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD.

- Resistance to meditating on the truths of God’s word can be due to little fear of God

Job 15:4 Indeed, you do away with reverence and hinder meditation before God.

- Lack of compassion to fellow man can result from a lack of fearing God

Malachi 3:5 “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts.

- Fearing man comes from little fear of God (also, committing additional fall-out sins consequent of fearing man, e.g. lying, can result from little fear of God)

Isaiah 57:11 Of whom were you worried and fearful when you lied, and did not remember Me Nor give Me a thought? Was I not silent even for a long time So you do not fear Me?