

November 27, 2016

“The Fear That Keeps You Near”

Exodus 20:18-21

Intro

- *God: Life Coach or LORD?*
- You cannot understand the Law of God unless you first appreciate the *nature* of God. Is God just like one of us who happens to be in charge?

Untamed God (v. 18, 21)

- God intends to leave an impression here.

When God Shows Up for Church

- Much of spiritual culture today wants to keep God at a comfortable distance.
 - *Drinking with the Lion present*
- “Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.” (v. 21). Even when God reveals himself, he remains deeply mysterious.

“...the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac” (Gen. 31:42)

- Some sights are so awesome and so frightening they pull you in.

✚ *Small God Syndrome: Do you find God to be easily ignorable?*

“It is this God, majestic and holy in his being, this God whose love knows no bounds because his holiness knows no limits, who has disappeared from the modern evangelical world.”
–David Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 300

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (**Prov. 1:7**)

- “You want to attain knowledge of the world? Start by standing in awe of the One who is causing it all to exist by an act of will.”

“After having gone round the whole circuit, after having weighed exactly all the sources of knowledge, Solomon’s conclusion of the whole matter is this: that *the fear of God* in its practical exercise is ‘the whole of man’ (Ecc. 12:13)—all his duty, all his happiness, his first lesson and his last.” –Charles Bridges, *Proverbs*, Kindle Loc. 27

Required Mediator (v. 19)

- The personal presence of God is unbearable to them. There is something threatening about it.

Frightened Retreat from Holiness

- This is the awful feeling of exposure and ruin when you are before the moral-
otherness of God.

“Woe is me! I am undone!” (**Isaiah 6:5**)

“But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’” (**Luke 5:8**)

–John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.1.2-3

“The Terrors of Law and of God”

- “Hell is eternity in the presence of God. Heaven is eternity in the presence of God—with a mediator.”

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31)

- In Scripture, one of the reasons God gave us his Law was to convince us that we cannot meet his standards of righteousness, so that we would be driven to Christ.

➤ *"The Revelation" by Flannery O'Connor*

- How do you dwell with a consuming fire? Only by atonement.

"The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view"
-A Debtor to Mercy Alone

- We take refuge *in God* from the terrible wrath of God. There is a kind of fear of God that believers need never experience.

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love" (1 John 4:18)

✚ *Small God Syndrome: Are you bored with the Gospel?*

Sanctified Fear (v. 20)

- There are things you fear even when the threat of harm has been removed.

"The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant" (Ps. 25:14)

"Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love" (Ps. 33:18)

"With you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared" (Ps. 130:4)

“Fear... So That You May Not Sin”

➤ *Karsten Piper & the dog*

- The fear that God wants us to experience does not keep us from approaching God but from running away from him.

“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. 12:28, 29).”
—**Charles Bridges**, *Proverbs*, Kindle Loc. 27

“The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.” (Prov. 14:27)

- In Christ, the Law becomes our guide to live a life that is pleasing to God (to walk in the fear of the Lord).

“Assemble the people... that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law” (Deut. 31:12)

✚ *Small God Syndrome: Are God’s commandments seen as optional?*

Joyful, Trembling Awe

“The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied” (Prov. 19:23)

“O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name” (Nehemiah 1:11)

➤ *F.O.M.O. (“Fear of Missing Out”)*

—**John Piper**, *A God-Entranced Vision of All Things*, 26-27