The Fear of God in Self-Examination

Looking at the different kinds of fear of God, or the various things the Bible tells us that we should fear, will help us to grow in grace, and motivate us to lives of holiness. Looking at these examples will also tell us more about what the fear of God really is than a mere study of definitions. However, if we were to find a single verse that is pretty comprehensive in defining the fear of God, it would be

Prov. 8:13 – "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."

Conversely, if a person shows no real hatred or avoidance of sin and evil, they obviously do not fear God.

The fear of God can be seen in the Bible in many ways, as

- A general awe and respect, acknowledging that he is the true God and the God of creation
- The fear of his manifest presence that makes men retreat or fall down in terror
- Fears of ultimate judgment (heaven and hell, the day of the LORD, even the judgment of believers before the judgment seat of Christ)
- **The fear of God is that which motivates us to a life of love and obedience to God, and to reject sin, so glorifying God and allowing us to enjoy his presence and person. It motivates us to honest self-examination, comparing our lives against particular scriptures. It is also what enables us to respond properly to that examination.**

This lesson will concentrate on valid fears of believers based on self-examination and comparing our lives against the Word of God and its many warnings and commands. Since these are innumerable, we will only look at a few of the major ones. How we respond to these warnings tells us whether we really fear God or are living in the danger of spiritual carelessness.

2 Cor. 13:5 – "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. …"

1. Unconfessed sin or unforgiveness

Mk. 11:25-26 – "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

If you have unforgiveness or a root of bitterness (Heb. 12:15) in your heart, then you should fear!

2. Displeasing God or grieving the Holy Spirit

Eph. 4:30-32 – "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

We (should) fear to disobey or to dishonor our earthly fathers. How much more should we fear displeasing God?

3. Rejecting the wisdom and chastisements of God

Prov. 1:24-32 When people reject the counsel of God and his corrections and reproofs, when they hate knowledge and do not choose the fear of the LORD, he says

"I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;" (26)

"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (28)

"Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (31)

4. Not having a love of the truth

2 Thess. 2:10-12 – "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"

Actually this is describing unbelievers in the context of the end times and the Antichrist, but we should ask ourselves whether we have received a love of the truth. Are we "valiant for the truth upon the earth" (Jer. 9:3)? If not, we will be susceptible to believing lies.

5. Doing things God hates

Prov. 6:16-19 – "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."

My guess is that at least 5 of those are not uncommon among church-goers.

6. Being given over by God to sin or apostasy

Ps. 36:1 – "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes."

Rom. 1:18-32 – "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" Then it speaks of those who reject the witness and revelation of God, becoming vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts are darkened. They proceed to various idolatries, sexual immoralities, and all kinds of wickedness. The result is that "God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts" (v. 24) and "God gave them up unto vile affections" (homosexuality and lesbianism, vv. 26-27). And because "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind" to take part in a whole catalog of sins (28-32).

While this is mainly talking about unbelievers, it is tragic that there are some "professing" Christians who seem to have no problem with lying, fornication, homosexuality, effeminate behavior, abortion, etc. There are even churches that cater to the LGBTQ crowd and promote abortion. It can also refer to the idolatry and polytheism in the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican churches.

("But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." – Heb. 6:9)

7. The removal of his presence

Ps. 51:11-12 – "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

This is following the exposure of David's sin with Bathsheba. He was mourning the loss of God's presence in his life, and an uninhibited, free and pure worship of God. Even apart from overt sins, we all go through dry times, but they should motivate us to seek God even more fervently (Song of Solomon 5).

8. Self-deception, or deceiving others

Jer. 17:9-10 – "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

Our earnest prayer should be Ps. 139:23-24 – "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.".

2 Tim. 3:13 – "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; "

Jas. 1:22-26 – "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

9. Self-confidence

1 Cor. 10:12 – "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (After saying we should take note of the failures of the Israelites in the wilderness, things that should be taken as warning examples to us.)

We should not give place to constant doubts and fears, and condemnation, but neither should we be so confident as to let down our guard.

1 P. 5:8 – "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

10. Being unprepared for his coming

Mt. 24:42-51 – "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This is followed immediately by the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (25:1-13).

If we are living like Christ will never return, we should be afraid.

11. Fruitlessness

Mk. 4:1-9, 13-20 (the parable of the sowing of the seed) – if you are still walking with God at all, you are not of the seed that fell by the wayside, but are you a rocky soil, or a weed-choked, or a 30/60/100 Christian?

Mt. 25:14-30 (the parable of the talents). We need to make sure we are not the wicked and slothful servant, cast into outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jn. 15:1-8 – "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. … He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. …"

These 11 items apply generally to all Christians. There are more other scriptures specifically addressing the duties and responsibilities of five-fold ministers, parents, children, old and young, rich and poor, employers and employees. The areas addressed above are examples though, of how we should approach the Word:

- What does it say?
- How does it apply to me?
- Am I doing it?
- Do I need to change to align myself with it?
- If so, how?

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