

Introduction

Recently a friend wrote on Facebook a consideration on the lack of the fear of the Lord. It was a subject I had spoken on some six weeks before in a series of meetings in Ireland. In reading her comments I was faced again with this theme. In the more serious moments of life the individual may ask, "What is the problem with my spirituality?" Despite the outward appearance of spirituality, despite the professed "adherence to the Scriptures", there are times when one may feel that their spiritual life is missing something. An individual may be saved but the pressing question each has to ask themselves is, "Do I have the effective power of divine life?" Or is the effective power of the gospel in transformed lives almost non-existent? In various countries of the world I have met many saints who feel this way spiritually, and a second question comes, "Where is the fire of God, the effective preaching of the gospel?"; "the maturing of the saints?" Is it possible that due to the lack of fear of the Lord I can be like Israel of whom God said: "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isa. 29:13).

The expression, "The fear of the Lord", is a clause which occurs in twenty-seven verses in the scriptures. Coupling with it are the clauses, "feared the Lord" (8 verses) and "fear God" (10 verses). On three occasions the expression, "fear God", is a command by God through the human penman. Those references are:

- a) "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments" (Ecc. 12:13). There is then given to us in the following verse why we should fear God, for there is a day of divine assessment.
- b) "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King." (1 Pet. 2:17)
- c) "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven . . . saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him." (Rev. 14:6-7)

Clarification

What is the fear of the Lord?

- a) There are two aspects of this subject:
 - i) That which the unsaved ought to have is a genuine frightening fear of facing God in His anger.
 1. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11)
 2. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:31)
 3. "God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psa. 7:11)
 4. "Fall on us, and hide us" (Rev. 6:16)
 - ii) That which ought to mark the believer.
 1. For the believer it is not frightened fear but a godly reverence and becoming lifestyle. It does not mean a down faced appearance and a fear lest God seems ready to pounce on me if I fail, or that I must constantly live in dread of failure.
 2. It does mean a glorious freedom like a little child knowing the boundaries of the home.
 3. It is the attitude of approaching God having:
 - (a) His respect due to His position. Cp. Solomon on his throne, approachable but with respect due to the throne. (1 Kgs. 10:19)
 - (b) The awareness of the consequences for wrong doing, Shimei, before Solomon's throne. (1 Kgs. 2:36-46)
 - (c) An appreciation of the fulness of His love, unlike Esther who did not know if she would be accepted until the king held out the scepter (Est. 5:2). The scepter God holds out is the invitation to: "Come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).
 - (d) The glory of the place He has brought me into, His banqueting house, and his banner over me is love (Song of Sol. 2:4)
 - (e) Living in a way becoming to Him, not to take his name in vain. (Prov. 30:9)

The Prerequisites For Fearing God

To fear God I must:

- a) Believe that God is the absolute God of divine revelation. He is not a mythical being.
- b) Believe He is and eternally exists.
- c) Having a living faith in the character and attributes of God, in other words, God is not theoretical but a real living being.

Illustration: When driving the roads I see a speed limit sign, but that law is theoretical to me, yet the moment I see a police man, immediately I glance at my speedometer, at that moment the theoretical law becomes a living reality.

The distinctions:

- a) There is a distinction between knowing God intellectually and knowing Him by experience.
 - i) Knowing about God intellectually could be the result of:
 1. Environment through creation. (Psa. 19:1; Rom. 1:20)
 2. Education, as the children of Israel were told to do to their children. (Deut. 4:10; 6:7)
 3. Enlightenment, as with Abraham. (Acts 7:2)
 - ii) Knowing of God experientially is by recognizing His activities in one's life. When this happens the individual begins to sense the closeness or distancing from His presence, when one is pleasing or grieving to Him. His presence becomes a reality.
- b) Another distinction is between factual belief and a living life changing belief.
 - i) When John wrote his gospel he made a major distinction (Jn. 20:30-31). Twice he mentions the matter of believing, but changes the words. He wrote: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name". The first "believe" is a noun, a fact, but the second is a verb, an action word. Many believe intellectually that Jesus is the Son of God but have never put their trust in Him for salvation, that is believing.

The First Impressions of God

- 1) First impressions are so important, either for an interview or in meeting an individual for the first time. This being so, what is the first impression we get from God of Himself? Accepting the fact we know nothing of Him, the questions range from, "What is He like?"; "What has He done?"; "What can he do?" In the following books God unfolds the glories of His person, position, power, principles, and prerogatives. Reading Genesis chapter one the first words are arresting: "In the beginning God!" In those few words there is revealed:
 - a) His descriptive Name. He is Elohim and it is a plural word which means either, plurality of persons (as we learn from later passages) working as one; or plurality of glories or excellencies. In the first creation narrative He is the God of power for He alone had power to;
 - i) Speak into existence: "let there be" and it was so. (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20; Jer. 51:15; Heb. 11:3)
 - ii) Create (Gen. 1:1, 21, 27). He has the exclusive ability to bring into being.
 - iii) Form (Gen. 1:7, 16, 25, 31 ; 2:2, 3). He has the exclusive ability to form with wondrous intricacy and make it beautiful, first time but never first attempt.
 - iv) Divide (Gen. 1:4)
 - v) Set (Gen. 1:17)
 - vi) Bring to ultimate fruition (Gen. 1:31: 2:1)
 - vii) Bless (Gen. 1:28; 2:3)
 - b) Another observation and revelation is His pre-creation existence, for He creates the heavens and the earth. Later we would learn of:

- i) His attributes:
 1. His wisdom: "To him that by wisdom made the heavens" (Psa. 136:5)
 2. His exclusiveness and self sufficiency: "Thus saith the LORD . . . I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth *by myself*" (Isa. 44:24)
 3. His wisdom and understanding: "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding" (Jer: 51:15)
- 2) While Genesis chapter one does not tell why God created, we do get a major reason in the writings of other scriptural writers.
 - a) "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." (Psa. 19:1)
 - b) "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else." (Isa. 45:18)
 - c) "For Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. 4:11)
- 3) The second impression of God is joined with the first manifestation of man.
 - a) He is the God who created the circumstances through which in man the blessing of curiosity and discovery could be awakened and enjoyed (Gen. 2:10-14), for the natural question would be, "What is at the end of the other rivers?"
 - b) He is the God of legislation and morality:
 - i) Adam could eat of every tree except that of good and evil. (Gen. 2:17)
 - ii) Adam was given a responsibility. (Gen. 2:15)
 - iii) God instructed man there would be consequences for disobedience (Gen. 2:17). This is further developed in Gen. 6:5-7; 11:2-9.
 - iv) God is the God of sympathetic understanding. (Gen. 2:18)

The Manifestation of God In Exodus and Leviticus

1) The Manifestation of God in Exodus

- a) Exodus reveals God in a different way, not as much now in sovereignty, but in His supremacy over every thing which is called or worshipped as "god".
 - i) "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD." (Ex. 12:12)
- b) He is manifested as the Deliverer of His people in the fulfillment of His promise:
 - i) "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." (Gen. 15:13)
 - ii) "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt." (Ex. 12:41)
 - iii) The difference shows they were in Egypt 30 years before the affliction started.
- c) Having delivered His people He has the power to sustain by providing their daily needs and to solemnize His legislation with demonstrated power and intimidation (Ex. 19:3-20:21). He supplied:
 - i) Water to drink:
 1. "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto

them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (Ex. 17:1-3, 6)

ii) Food to eat:

1. "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground." (Ex. 16:11-14)

2) **The Manifestation of God in Leviticus**

- a) The truth of God's authority over man (mentioned in Ex. 6:6; 7:5) in every aspect of life, comes to the fore in the expression: "I am the Lord", mentioned 45 times.
 - i) "For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy". (Lev. 11:44-45)
 - ii) "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God . . . Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD". (Lev. 18:2-5)
 - iii) "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD" (Lev. 19:30)
 - iv) "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 19:31)
 - v) "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD" (Lev. 19:32)

. . . Rowan Jennings