

## “FEAR GOD.” (1 PETER 2:17) Part 2 of 2

Sermon to the Saints at Westboro Baptist Church, December 25, 2016

(Starting today and through January 1, 2017, our twitter account, @WBCSaysRepent will have a special sparkle and shine—so follow, follow, follow)

The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments, Ecclesiastes 12:13. Last week we saw from the Bible that the fear of God is the sine qua non of true religion; we acknowledged that this is a filial fear and not a servile fear, and we learned the true nature of the fear of God which is due to the triune God on account of his glory, majesty, and attributes. Today we will further open why “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.” (Psalm 89:7). Specifically we will see what the Bible tells us about how this fear of God is manifest or shown openly in his children, what is the cause or the source of the fear of God, and finally describe the temporal and spiritual happiness of those who enjoy the benefits of the fear of God pursuant to the terms of the everlasting covenant of grace.

How does this God-given fear appear, and by what is it manifested or shown openly?

\*In a hatred of sin. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." (Proverbs 8:13). As nothing is more opposite to good than evil, nothing is more to be abhorred. "Abhor that which is evil." (Romans 12:9). A man that fears God, who has a reverential affection for him, will hate it as being contrary to him. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." (Psalm 97:10). Everything that is evil is hated by such a man; as evil thoughts, which are only evil and that continually (Genesis 6:5); the heart is full of evil thoughts (Jeremiah 17:9), and out of it they daily proceed (Matthew 15:19). "I hate vain thoughts," says David, at Psalm 119:113. Evil words are also hated by him; not only cursing (James 3:10), false swearing (Leviticus 19:12), blasphemy (Psalm 74:18), and all obscene and filthy language (Colossians 3:8), but every vain and idle word (Matthew 12:36), foolish expression (Ephesians 5:4), which comes out of his mouth when not on his guard, gives him uneasiness, as being displeasing to God, grieving to his Spirit, and what must be accounted for in the day of judgment. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day

of judgment.” (Matthew 12:36). “For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.” (Ecclesiastes 5:7).

And if evil thoughts and evil words are hated by such, then most certainly evil actions; and not only those of others, as the deeds of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:15), the garment, the outward conversation garment spotted with the flesh (Jude 1:23), the filthy conversation of the wicked (2 Peter 2:7), but his own actions springing from corrupt nature, done by him contrary to the law of his mind; "What I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that I do." (Romans 7:15). Evil men and their company are abhorrent to those that fear the Lord, and are shunned and avoided by them (Proverbs 4:14-15); they choose not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11), and the workers of them (Psalm 6:8). Society with them is a grief and burden to them, as it was to Lot, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others. In fact it is hateful to them: "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them that hate thee? And am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. 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." (Psalm 139:19-24). "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:14-18).

\*All evil and false ways, not only of immorality, but of superstition and will-worship, are rejected with abhorrence by men that fear the Lord, and make his word the rule of their faith and practice. Wisdom herself, or Christ, has set an example, proving the truth of the assertion in Proverbs 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." David says: "I hate every false way." (Psalm 119:128). All evil doctrines, which falsely reflect on the divine persons in the Godhead, on the free grace of God in man's salvation, on the person and offices of Christ, and the operations of the Spirit, are the object of the hatred and aversion of one that fears God. (Walk into any of these so-called churches especially during this high and holy idolatrous season—when the pews of these

whorehouses will be at their fullest--and you will hear nothing but lies about these most vital precious truths of God). He cannot bear them that are evil (Revelation 2:2), neither receive them into his house, nor wish them God speed. "For he that biddeth him God's speed is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 2:10-11. In short, everything that is evil in its nature, as sin is in every shape exceeding sinful, a breach of the law of God, contrary to his nature, that abominable thing his righteous soul hates (Psalm 11:5), is also hateful to a good man, to a man that fears the Lord, and hereby the fear of the Lord is manifested by him.

\*It shows itself by departing from evil; "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." (Proverbs 16:6). Also, "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil." (Proverbs 3:7). Not only from open and public sins, but from private and secret ones, too. Job was a man that feared God and eschewed evil (Job 1:1), avoided and departed from it, as every wise man does. "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28). "A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident." (Proverbs 14:16). Such an one will abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22), from everything that looks like it or leads unto it; will shun every avenue, every bypath, that has a tendency to ensnare into it, taking the wise man's advice, "Enter not into the path of the wicked," etc. Proverbs 4:14-15.

\*The fear of God appears in men in not allowing themselves to do what others do, and what they themselves formerly did; so Nehemiah, speaking of some improper things done by former governors, says, "So did not I, because of the fear of God." (Nehemiah 5:15). Not that such who fear God are without sin (1 Timothy 1:15); they are sensible of it (Romans 7:21), acknowledge it (Psalm 51:3), and implore the pardon of it (Psalm 25:11); but they cannot walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, and in a sinful course of life; they have not so learned Christ, and the grace of God teaches them other things. (Ephesians 4:17-32; Titus 2:11-12).

\*The fear of God manifests itself by a carefulness not to offend God or man. "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." (1 Corinthians 10:32-33). "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward man."

And next to God they are careful that they “offend not against the generation of [his] children” (Psalm 73:15), either by word or deed, and even to put no stumbling block before any (Romans 14:13), “but fear the Lord [their] God,” (Deuteronomy 6:13) for to do otherwise would be contrary to his word. (Leviticus 19:14: “Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.”). Therefore, they are always on their guard to avoid sin and give no offence by it, and to be opposed to sin; the spiritual part in them “lusteth” against the carnal part; there are as it were two armies in them fighting one against another; they strive against sin, and in that fight they take to themselves the whole armour of God, and make use of it against it. See Ephesians 5:11-20. Our brother, Charles, did a very worthwhile sermon on April 5, 2015, for you to review again on this subject.

\*The fear of God in men is seen by a constant attendance on the worship of God, and by a strict regard to his will and the observation of it; the fear of God has so great a share and concern in divine worship, as we covered last week, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it, both internal and external: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Such who fear the Lord cannot be easy in the neglect of the worship of God, but as they desire to be filled with the knowledge of his will, so to be found in the practice of it; and, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, to walk in all the ordinances and commands of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1:5-6). And such who make a custom of forsaking the assembling of themselves together to worship God, do cast off the fear of God. Hebrews 10:25. Jonah 2:8-9: “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”

\*The fear of God is seen and known in men by their withholding nothing from God, though ever so dear to them, whenever he requires of them; so Abraham, when he readily offered up his son at the command of God, received this testimony from him, "I know," saith the Lord, "that thou fearest God," Genesis 22:12. On the contrary, when men keep back a part from God of what he expects from them, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), it is a proof that the fear of God is not before their eyes and in their hearts. (Romans 3:18; Jeremiah 32:40).

What is the cause of the fear of God, or the source of the fear of God?

\*It is not from nature, nor is it in natural men; the lacking of it is a part of the description of corrupt nature, and of men in a natural state; "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3:18). It may be fairly said of the heart of every natural man, what Abraham said of Gerar, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place." (Genesis 20:11). This may be reasonably concluded from the wickedness that is in a person or place, and that by what comes out of it; "The transgression of the wicked," discovered by his words and works, his life and actions, "saith within my heart," suggests this to my mind, speaks as plainly as can be spoken, it is the observation of David, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes." (Psalm 36:1).

\*It arises from the grace of God; it is a gift and grant of grace. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29). And who will give such a heart? None but God can give it, and he has promised it in covenant; it is a blessing of his grace, which he has provided in it. See, e.g., "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jeremiah 32:39-40).

In consequence of which promise and covenant,

\*It is implanted in the heart in regeneration; it is put there by the Spirit of God, where it was not before, and where it never could have been, had he not put it there, and it appears as soon in a regenerate man as any grace whatever; upon first conversion there is quickly found a tenderness of conscience with respect to sin, and a carefulness not to offend God; and indeed "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10). No man is truly wise until he fears God, and as soon as he fears the Lord he begins to be wise, and not before. The fear of the Lord is wisdom itself; it is that wisdom and truth which God desires and puts into the inward and hidden parts of the heart. "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28). "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom." (Psalm 51:6).

\*The word and prayer are the means of attaining it; the fear of the Lord, as it is a duty, and expressive of worship, is to be learned; "Come ye children, hearken unto me," says David, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord." (Psalm 34:11). The law of God, and especially the whole of doctrine both legal and evangelical, is the means of learning it. See Deuteronomy 4:10: "Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." And see Deuteronomy 17:19: "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them." "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes 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 for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." (Psalm 19:7-11). As a grace it is diligently sought after and earnestly prayed for to God; the heart must not only be instructed but united to fear the Lord, and which is to be prayed for, as in Psalm 86:11: "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name." And see Proverbs 2:3-5: "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God."

\*It is encouraged, promoted, and increased by fresh discoveries of the grace and goodness of God, "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness"; the goodness of God made known, bestowed, and applied, greatly influences the fear of him, Hosea 3:5; especially an application of his pardoning grace and mercy, "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared." (Psalm 130:4).

Finally I want to talk about the happiness of those that fear the Lord. There is scarcely any one character by which the people of God are described, under which more promises of good things are made unto them, than this.

First, with respect to things temporal. Godliness in general, and this part of it, the fear of the Lord, in particular, has the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come. 1 Timothy 4:8.

\*It is promised they shall have no want, not of temporal good things, "O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him." (Psalm 34:9-10). No want of any good thing; that is, which is suitable and convenient for them (Proverbs 30:8-9), and God in his wisdom sees fit and proper for them; and rather than they shall want, he will do wonders for them, and open sources of relief they never thought of. See Isaiah 41:17-18 and Isaiah 43:19-20.

\*Though they may have but little of the good things of this world, yet "better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures and trouble therewith." (Proverbs 15:16). This with the fear of God and with righteousness is better than great revenues without right, and better than the riches of many wicked. (Proverbs 16:8 and Psalm 37:16).

\*Wealth and riches are promised to be in the house of that man that fears the Lord, and that by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honor, and life; see Psalm 112:1, 3 and Proverbs 22:4; which can only be understood of some, not of all that fear the Lord; unless spiritual wealth, riches, honor, and life, are intended, since the fear of the Lord itself is the good man's treasure. Isaiah 33:6: "And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure."

\*Psalm 128. "Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." Amen.

\*They that fear the Lord are in the utmost safety; in his fear is strong confidence, and they have no reason to be afraid of anything; they shall not be visited with evil, yea the angel of the Lord encamps round about them and protects, defends,

and delivers them from all dangers and from all enemies. See Proverbs 14:26; Proverbs 19:23; and Psalm 34:7.

\*"The fear of the Lord longeth days," or adds unto them, Proverbs 10:27, which was always reckoned a great temporal blessing. The wise man says of a sinner, "though his days be prolonged," as they may be, and he not happy, "yet surely," says he, "I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him," Ecclesiastes 8:12, be their days more or fewer.

\*Secondly, with respect to things spiritual, much is promised to them that fear the Lord, and they are spoken of as most happy persons. Psalm 144:15: "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."

\*The Lord is said to take pleasure in them that fear him, as having the utmost complacency and delight in them (Psalm 16:3), being his special and peculiar people (Psalm 135:4), his Hephzibah in whom he delights, his Beulah to whom he is married (Isaiah 62:4). Psalm 147:11: "The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."

\*They are accepted of him, and are acceptable to him. "Of a truth," says Peter, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts 10:34-35). His person is accepted with him in Christ the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6), and his sacrifices of prayer and praise are acceptable to him through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5).

\*The heart of God is towards them. He has a sympathy and fellow feeling with them in all their distresses (Psalm 107:6), trials (2 Corinthians 1:4), and exercises (Hebrews 12:11); in all their afflictions he is afflicted (Isaiah 63:9), and he comforts and supports them (2 Corinthians 1:3); "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." (Psalm 103:13).

\*The eye of the Lord is upon them for good. "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him." (Psalm 33:18). Not only his eye of providence, which runs to and fro throughout the earth to show himself strong on their behalf (2 Chronicles 16:9), to protect and defend them (Psalm 119:114), and to avenge himself on their enemies (Deuteronomy 32:43); but his eye of special love, grace, and mercy, is upon them, and is never withdrawn from them, but is ever delighting in them and caring for them.

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(Psalm 103:11 and 17). And see Luke 1:50: "And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation."

\*His hand is open and ready to communicate to them. Psalm 111:5: "He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant." That is he communicates spiritual food, the blessings of his covenant, of which he is ever mindful; the comforts of his Spirit in which they walk who walk in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9:31); he gives them grace, fresh and rich supplies of it (1 Peter 5:5; Philippians 4:19), and at last gives them glory (Romans 9:23); and in the meanwhile withholds no good thing from them (Psalm 84:11), to support their faith, encourage their hope, and engage their trust in him and dependence on him.

\*Psalm 25:14: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." The secrets of his heart's love to them, and of his gracious designs towards them, are disclosed unto them, by which he befriends them warmly; and he will show them his covenant, the blessings and promises of it, and their interest in the terms and conditions of that covenant, "which are ordered in all things, and sure." (2 Samuel 23:5). What is said of Christ the head of the covenant is true of all the covenant ones in their measure at Malachi 2:5: "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name." To which may be added, Psalm 145:19: "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them." Psalm 91:15-16: "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation."

\*They are remembered by him with the favor he bears to his own people. "Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old." (Psalm 25:6). "Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever[.]" (Psalm 136:23). He brings them out of the house of bondage [Egypt] and brings them into the Promised Land. (Exodus 13:14; Deuteronomy 6:18-21). He remembers his promises to them, and fulfils them; "a book of remembrance is" said to be "written before him, for them that feared the Lord." (Malachi 3:16).

\*It is promised to them "that fear the name" of the Lord, that "unto" them "the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." (Malachi 4:2). Christ the

Savior shall come and reveal himself with a discovery and application of pardoning grace and mercy. One that "fears the Lord," though he "walks in darkness and hath no light," yet he is encouraged to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." (Isaiah 50:10).

\*"Salvation," a fresh view of interest in it, a renewed application of it to their souls, as well as the full enjoyment of it, "is nigh them that fear" the Lord. (Psalm 85:9). For that salvation is nearer to them than when they first believed, and had the fear of God first implanted in them, and were first set to seek after it, and had first hope of an interest in it. (Romans 13:11).

\*And, finally great and good things are laid up for such God-fearing persons in the heart of God (Ephesians 2:4-7), in the covenant of grace (2 Samuel 23:5), in the preparations of Christ (John 14:2), and in heaven (Colossians 1:5); even a blessed hope (Titus 2:13), a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), and things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard of, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of (1 Corinthians 2:9). Psalm 31:19: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"

I love you. Amen