

2159 - REVERENCE for GOD - Acts 9:31

PRELIMS. I am sure we all **want** this church to have *peace* and to **grow in numbers!** But we also want the growth to be **spiritual and in the Lord** as a result of the work of the **Holy Spirit**. Well here we have a clue **how** that may happen! Of course God is **sovereign** (there is **no formula** that **guarantees** revival, else we would all be doing it)! But God has appointed '**means**' by which spiritual growth does come. Here we read that the church **multiplied by walking in the fear of the Lord!** [31] There is not too much of that around today!

There is a lot of **misunderstanding** about 'the fear of the Lord' even among Xns! I've heard it said that, that to fear God is **unXn!** That God is **love** and therefore to fear Him is **subXn!** It is as if it is a bad thing to 'fear' God. Now as there are many references to 'fearing God' in Scripture, let us look at this whole subject of **fearing God!**

WHAT IS IT TO FEAR GOD

It means to **reverence** and **respect God** for **who** He is. He is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth and **all** that there is, visible and invisible! It is to **recognise** His **Absolute** and **Sovereign authority!** It is to adore/worship His majesty/wisdom in ruling the universe. It is to be being **aware** that He is **alive** and **well** and **monitors** all events of history **and present day human affairs** among men, governments and all social activities. Notice Neh's reference to 'fearing God' in [Neh 5:9,15]. Their **lack** of the 'fear of God' was regarding the **daily dealings** of Israel in **business, commerce** and **social life - not** about their prayer life or **temple or worship services**, but their interactions of daily life! The *great outcry of the people* [Neh5:1] was about the **oppression of the poor** in the daily business of the community! Israel were **not aware** that God was to be 'feared' in **these and in all aspects of life!**

To fear God actually **doesn't** necessarily mean to be **afraid** of Him although it may include that. Think of it - **what** is there to be afraid of? Is the God of the Bible a **tyrant?** Is He a **depot...capricious?** Is God **unjust?** Is God **cruel?** Does God **abuse** His power/authority?

Absolutely **not!** Then what is there to fear about God? Is God **kind?**

Is God **merciful**? Then surely we should **be drawn to** this Being and **not** afraid of Him! When we **analyse** our so called ‘fear’ of God, it is actually **not God** we are afraid of, but His **attributes of justice, truth, righteousness!** God administers His attributes honestly, fairly, righteously. God **loves** His creatures – and as a wise Father He will **chasten righteously** but He will **never punish unjustly!** So. If we believe God is just/honest why be afraid of Him? It is our **innate guilt**, it is our ‘**inward sense of justice against all wrong-doing**’, that makes us afraid of God - and of what may lie ahead. The so called fear of God we have, is not really a fear of a ‘**Giant Despair,/ Jack in the Beanstalk Ogre**’ type God, but fear of the **consequences** of our own wrong doing! It is the fear of God’s just and righteous **judgment** on sinners that we are really afraid of, not God Himself!

Fear of God is a **good** thing! When the **Hebrew midwives** *feared God* [Ex 1:17] they were **not** afraid of God, but rather had a **belief** in Him and respect/love for His commands/laws, and that He would multiply their seed. They also believed it was wrong to kill babies!

When you fear God, you also **worship** Him! John in the Revelation tells us of an angel saying: *Fear God and give Him glory...and worship Him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea* [Rev14:7]. Yes, ‘fearing God’ is **equated with worshipping** Him. Worship is from the root ‘**worthy**’ and means God is **worthy** of respect/love!

The IMPORTANCE of FEARING GOD

It is a great **instructor** – for **not** to fear Him is to be largely **ignorant!** Well, at least that is the opinion of a great philosopher and the wisest king who ever lived – Solomon! *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge* [Pro 1:7]! Ie, you don’t really know anything until you know about God! In fact, Solomon went **further** – he said that unless you **apply** that knowledge you will still remain ignorant, for he said *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* which is **applied** knowledge (and the **practise** of) [Pro 9:10].

Fearing God is **instructive**. We are always ‘**subdued**’ after an **adverse** experience! We are always a bit **more humble** after a blow! Listen to **Job**: *the fear of the Lord that is wisdom* [Job 28:28] He said this **after** the harsh treatment of providence which his friends

said was punishment from God! Even although we ‘get it wrong’, like Job’s friends did, and when we are **confused**, like Job was, there are **lessons to learn** from **adverse** providences because they always make us a little more **humble**. We learn we are not ‘masters of our own destiny’! We lean that we are actually ‘**dependent** on God’!!

True fear of God also **inspires/stimulates** those who believe. It gives us **energy/vision/ life!** Solomon *the **fear** of the Lord is a **fountain** of **life*** [Pro 14:27]! It is the **source** of true life. Jesus described it as *a **spring** of water **welling up to eternal life*** [John4:14]. The fear of God should **never stultify/blunt** our **enthusiasm** for Christ but rather **stimulate** and **excite** it! Friends, a view of God in His greatness should **not** fill us with **dread/fear** but with **adoration/admiration**.

APP Yes, I know we have sinned and will inherit just judgment from God, but have **you** never heard about His **forgiveness** which is **over all** His other works? If you are afraid of God tonight, **repent** and **turn** to Him and He will pardon **all** your sins and accept you. You will then see His **glory** in pardoning sinners and **blessing** them!

True ‘fear of God’ **enables holiness** and **godliness!** Listen to Paul: *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing **holiness to completion in the fear of God!*** [2Cor7:1] **APP** To **reflect** on, and to **mediate** on the goodness and greatness of God, is to be **sanctified!** **+work out your own salvation thru fear and trembling for it is God who works in you** [Phil 2:12] Fearing God is the result of God’s Spirit **working!** Job was a man **blameless and upright, one who feared God** [Job1:1]

The ACHIEVEMENTS of FEARING GOD

It is **creative!** Fear of God (ie, respect for) God is **not a negative** thing - a **positive/practical** thing! It **builds** and **creates**. Noah’s **ark!** *Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in **reverent fear** constructed an **ark** for the saving of his household* [Heb 11:7] Wonderful? **APP** **Timidity** of God renders Xns useless – respect **enables positive** action! Many people think godliness consists in **withdrawal** from social and national life – but actually it means **involvement!** Love for God will make us **energetic** in **promoting** the kingdom of God and in **building up** society! Xns

were known as the ones who **establish godly institutions!**

It **increases** faith - Abram **faith!** *now I know that you fear God* after offering Isaac, and after demonstrating his **increased** faith! True fear equals **powerful faith!** True 'fear of God' makes you believe in Him **more** and **strengthens** you to **do great things** for God! *the people who know their God shall **stand firm** and **take action*** [Dan 11:32] Hebrew 11 is about the great things God's people did thru faith **and** the '**fear of God!**' It was **not** that they believed in themselves - but in God's promise to bless those who **serve Him** in building up a society of godly institutions. These heroes believed God '**answers**' those who respond to Him in loving **obedience** to His commands. They believed God blesses those who fear Him in **obeying** His commands. They know it is the best way to live!

Deathbed repentance! The thief on Cross rebuked his colleague *Don't you fear God?* [L23:40]! It is terribly **sad** to hear of people on their deathbed who are totally **immune** to the **significance** of death (meeting our Maker) and the idea of **accountability** to their Maker/Creator! We read of those who are **slaves of fear** and are *subject to bondage* – but it is **not** a Godly fear they have, but a *fear of death* [Heb 2:15]. But Christ has come (sent by a loving gracious God, not an Ogre God) to *deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery* [Heb 2:15]! That verse teaches us that **Christ came to set us free from the 'fear of death'!** **APP** Are you '**bound**' by a fear of the future and what it holds? Many people are, although they do not state it! If you are, then Christ is the answer!

Truly 'fearing God', achieves **church growth!** Our text says the Church **multiplied, walking in the fear of the Lord!** We need to be much more **sensitive** and **aware** of God's active presence in **all the affairs of life**. Our business dealings and social life. And we need to **talk** a lot more about God! There **are** plenty of opportunities to just talk of God! We need to **live** as if we believed God was **standing beside us!** Because God **actually is standing** beside us! We read that the *The word is **near** you, in your mouth and **in** your heart*. We just don't realise it. Because we are 'carried away', obsessed with the **visible** - instead of the **spiritual!**