

## The Missing Key

*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:*

*And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,*

*the spirit of wisdom and understanding,*

*the spirit of counsel and might,*

*the spirit of knowledge **and of the fear of the Lord;** (Isaiah 11:1-2 KJV; emphasis added)*

Isaiah the prophet, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, looks into the future to describe the Person and Messiah Jesus. Among other things, Jesus would:

- possess the spirit of knowledge
- and of the fear of the Lord

Knowledge stemming from *fear of the Lord*. I firmly believe this is *the* key to living the Christian life successfully. For years this main foundational truth of Christianity has escaped me. In short, I have failed to fear God *enough* or *consistently*.

Jesus lived to *fear* the Lord. Verse **3 of Isaiah 11** tells us this very truth: "*And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord* (ESV)." Much of **Isaiah 11** is ultimately referring to the time when Jesus returns to this earth and establishes His Millennial Kingdom. However, when Jesus lived His earthly life several thousand years ago, He did this exact same thing. He judged not by what He saw *outwardly*, but by what He saw *inwardly* in people. This was the result of His delight in the fear of the Lord. This fear blessed Him with a resultant righteousness and godly knowledge. Do you want that?

Authentic Christians are *granted* righteousness; imputed to us (**Romans 3:21-22**). How many of us *experience* a life that *is* righteous? Myself included? Not many. Why is that? Because we do not fear the Lord.

### Fear Promotes Right Living

If we do not fear the Lord, why would we think we could even begin to live truly righteous lives? Fear of God is *the* motivator, though often non-existent. While many of us have spent years *trying* to live the Christian life by putting it on from the outside and by our own effort, do the things we believe we should be doing, in truth, God sees the problem and condition of our hearts. What do our hearts tell God? We do not fear Him.

Do we truly love God? Do we love others as He commands? Do we want to serve others from the heart? Do we want to avoid sin? Do we want to live a life that truly pleases and glorifies God? We must *fear* Him.

I now (finally!) understand that all of this can only be truly accomplished if the foundation of our Christian lives is based on a true, reverential, profound fear and even *dread* of the LORD God. Dread? Yes, dread.

If God were to appear in our home physically in His glory, what do you think your reaction would be? Do you think you'd go up to Him, pat Him on the back and smile brightly? I don't believe so. I believe we would fall on our faces before Him as though "dead" people. Was this not the reaction of many in His Word, from Daniel to Job, to the apostle John and many in between? There is something so consciously overpowering about God - His omniscience and omnipotence and His omnipresence - that saints knew that they were *nothing* in His Presence. Don't think it is only the "Old Testament" where this applies.

Consider the main attitude of many to most within Christendom today. We see people largely focused on God's *love*. That's all they talk about. They admonish and encourage us to seek God because He wants us to find "happiness." They tell us God is there to help us achieve our impossible dreams.

I've run across too many who claim to be Christian who believe God will "make their dreams come true." Their dreams range from finding that right person to owning a large home, having a family, finding the right job or starting a business that will become huge. Others believe God wants them to succeed in business, Hollywood or in the music industry. To these people, God is a celestial genie who apparently longs to make our every wish come true and it isn't simply *three* wishes. Their wishes are ongoing; never ending.

The reality? God wants our fear, our service and our dedication to Him. The idea that God has a "plan" for your life has become "God wants you to be thoroughly happy!"

This whole line of thought is anti-God. In fact, it is *hatred* of and for Him because it is not based in the truth of His Word or His actual character. It is a completely wrong view of God that is literally born of Satan.

A true palpable fear of God takes us out of ourselves. It moves us to focus on God and pleasing Him from the heart. We become His *servants*. The fact that we do not genuinely fear God as outlined in His holy Word is the reason so many of us are living lives that are anti-biblical and filled with failure and sinfulness.

Please understand that I am absolutely *including* myself in this. I am *not* pointing my finger at you. I am coming along side you and admitting that I have not lived a life of reverential fear of God and asking you to ponder the same question. I honestly do not believe we can fear God enough.

Fear of God is truly where it all starts. Without that fear, nothing within us changes. The key that prompts us to live holy lives from our hearts is a right fear of God. It is the exact same trait that prompted Jesus to live a holy life before God the Father. It is why the Father could say about Jesus at His baptism by John, that He was well pleased with God the Son. Jesus delighted in fearing God. Though God the Father would undoubtedly say that I am "righteous" (because of Christ's righteousness), I have to wonder if He would indeed be happy with the way I've been living my life. The answer? A resounding NO because of the lack of fear in my heart. That *must* change.

## Fear Overcomes Temptation to Sin

As we consider the many places in Scripture where people either avoided sin or gave into it, it all comes back to the very same issue. Either those people *feared* God or they did *not* fear Him. It is the same with you and me. Jesus feared God perfectly 100% of the time.

What caused Joseph to literally *run* from Potiphar's wife who tempted Joseph to lie with her (**Genesis 39**)? Fear of God. *That* caused Joseph to flee from her presence even leaving behind part of his garment, which she later used against Joseph to "prove" her case. Joseph had such a healthy fear of God that he actually delighted in doing what was right in spite of hardships that resulted from it. Because of that fear, God was able to use him mightily.

What prompted Job to respond to the deaths of his children with, "*The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord*" (**Job 1:21**)? The fear of God (**v 8**). We learn over the course of the entire book, Job learned exactly how important it was to fear God. We can rightly conclude that Job feared God much more by the end of that book than he had at the beginning, though he obviously feared God in the beginning. One of the points of Job's book is that we cannot fear God *enough*.

When David sinned with Bathsheba and then deliberately had her husband Uriah killed in battle, we ask why (**2 Samuel 11**)? The answer is simple. It is because David lacked the *fear of* the Lord then. Had he feared God as he had done so often, he would have done what was right in that situation also. Yet, David set aside the fear of the Lord and disaster was the result, not just for him, but for the nation of Israel.

Why do people of the world sin as they do and often with abandon? Because they have no fear of the Lord (**Romans 3:18**). This is why we have corrupt politicians. It is why criminals do what they do. It is why people commit adultery, steal, lie, cheat and even *litter*, because they have no fear of God. Too many of us Christians are like them because no fear of God exists in our *hearts*.

I firmly believe that if we learn to fear God, we would sin *less* and it would be more naturally occurring. We would endeavor to live lives that pleased Him.

## Fear Allows Us to Know God

Fear of God is seen in how a person lives and it is best noted in our interpersonal relationship. If we truly fear God, we will see others as better than ourselves. This is true *humility*. The fear of God is *the* key that creates within us the desire to *serve* God and others. It allows us to fulfill the command, "*Do unto others as you would have them to unto you*" (**Matthew 7:12**), from our hearts, as opposed to gritting our teeth and doing it because we *should* but really don't want to.

Fear provides the *desire* and *power*.

Fear of God is the true key that separates us from ourselves. Without a fear of God, we focus on our own wants and felt needs. Learning to delight in the fear of God *should* be the main portion for every Christian. Yet, it is not. When was the last time you heard a preacher speak about our need to fear the LORD God? Fearing God is what separates the Christian from a defeated life.

Consider any sin that you can think of. Now ask yourself how to avoid it *naturally* from within, with the strength that only comes from God Himself. All sin can be avoided as our fear of God grows. No, we will never be sinlessly perfect in this life, but we can aim for it. Fear of God is the missing component.

We hear much today about "knowing" God; *how* to know Him, *why* we should know Him, the *benefits* of knowing Him, etc. But we often hear about that concept without the much needed *fear* of God. We cannot truly know God unless we learn to fear Him. It is impossible.

Solomon said, "*The fear of the Lord is the **beginning** of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction,*" (**Proverbs 1:7**; emphasis added). Even though what Solomon initially asked God for was considered good by God, what if Solomon had asked for a thorough and life-changing fear of God instead? Solomon ultimately got there didn't he? In **Ecclesiastes 12:13** he says, "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep His commandments. For this is the whole duty of man.*"

Notice please that Solomon first says to *fear* God. From this flows the ability to keep His commandments because of inner desire from fear. Fear is the entire basis of living righteously from the heart for every believer. Without it, we cannot know God, we cannot please God, and we cannot grow in Him.

Too many Christians today fear many things - loss of a job, loss of a spouse, CV-19, or death. But the one thing we *should* fear we do not. We must learn to fear God and grow in that fear daily, or we will never learn what it means to live in victory over sin.

We will talk much more about this topic in future articles. The fear of God is *that* important. Without it, we deceive ourselves. With it, we begin to truly serve the LORD God from the heart.

How to gain fear? Start by *asking* God to create it within you. You have not because you ask not (**James 4:3**) Start asking Him *daily* to put His fear within you.