

Cultivating the Fear of the Lord

Introduction: This week we begin a new sermon series on the fear of the Lord. Today we are looking at Psalm 73, which serves as a case study in cultivating the fear of the Lord. After this week we will turn our attention to the book of Proverbs, which gives an extended argument for why it is good and appropriate to cultivate a fear the Lord. May this study gives each of us a vision for what that looks like to fear God in a healthy way.

Opening Discussion: When you were growing up, who was somebody you feared being on the wrong side of?

1. What initially comes to mind when you hear the expression, "the fear of the Lord?"
2. Does the idea that we should fear the Lord sound out of place for New Testament believers living in the age of grace? Why or why not?

Read Psalm 73

3. Initially, when Asaph looked at the wicked, what did he see? How did he feel (vv. 2-12)?
4. Initially, how did he feel about his own devotion to God (vv. 13-14)?
5. How did Asaph ultimately deal with his doubts and temptations (vv. 15-17)?
6. Asaph began to see things clearly when he came into the sanctuary of God (v. 17). For us, what does it mean to come into the sanctuary of God?
7. How did Asaph's perspective change when he began to look at things from God's perspective (vv. 18-20)?

8. What might it take for us to get to where Asaph was in verses 25-28?

9. In what ways do you relate to Asaph's struggle?

Steve said:

There is a core biblical term that describes Asaph's settled conviction that those who love the nearness of God are safe and that those who could care less what God think are in a very dangerous place. That term is ***the fear of the Lord***. When you "fear God" you are intensely concerned about aligning your life with God and His ways. When you fear God, you love what God loves and you hate what God hates. When you fear the Lord you realize it's a very dangerous thing to be at odds with God and His ways. Asaph came to these convictions. And so we can say that Asaph cultivated "the fear of the Lord" in his life.

10. How much is "the fear of the Lord" a motivating factor in your life?

Steve said:

My challenge and invitation to each of you today is to make a commitment to cultivating the fear of the Lord in your own life. We're probably in a lot of different places when it comes to the fear of the Lord. The encouraging thing from Scripture is that the fear of the Lord isn't something that you either have or you don't; it's not like having blue eyes. You can cultivate the fear of the Lord; you can learn to fear the Lord (Deut. 14:23). That's one of the most valuable reasons to study the book of Proverbs; it argues convincingly that aligning yourself with God is wise and doing the opposite is foolish. This is true whether you're talking about sexuality or words or money or friendships or wine or how you treat your neighbors. (I.e., Proverbs explains how you "fear God" when it comes to the words we speak.) We're going to study Proverbs with a view toward cultivating the fear of the Lord in our midst.

11. How much do you agree with the statement, "I want to make a commitment to cultivate the fear of the Lord in my life?"

12. What can you begin doing or continue doing to cultivate a stronger sense of the fear of the Lord?