

# The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Counseling

George Scipione

## Engaging the Heart

- I. We live in dangerous times!
  - A. While we rejoice to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, it seems the Church goes backwards into darkness.
  - B. The massive blessings on protestant Europe/America seem to be dissipating like the morning dew on a hot day.
    1. Europe is a wasteland, Ex. the Czech Republic
    2. The USA is rushing to follow.
    3. Of course, the Gates of Hell will not win! But.... the short term looks bleak.
- II. What is lacking in Western culture in general and in the churches in particular?
  - A. I believe the key is: the lack of a view of God's holiness and man's response, the Fear of the Lord.
  - B. Most supposed believers have a "Mr. Potato Head" view of God.
  - C. In the Bible, people who get a clear view of God are sure they will die!
    1. Moses at the bush.
    2. Gideon at the rock
    3. Manoah, Sampson's dad
    4. Isaiah in the Temple.
  - D. Most professing believers never come close to this, but have a very shallow, truncated Mr. Potato Head view of God.
    1. You pick the attributes you like!
    2. Satan is not so foolish! James 2:18-20. Satan is a Trinitarian 5 point Calvinist Presbyterian.
- III. The Fear of the LORD is the beginning- and the end- of counseling! Romans 11:33-36.
  - A. John 15 points out the true circular nature of redeemed life. If you love God you'll keep His commands; if you keep them, you'll abide in His love. There is forgiveness with Him so that you will fear Him, Deut. 4:1-14.
  - B. The starting point is a fear driven repentance and faith in His mercy.
  - C. **Westminster Larger Catechism # 76:** What is Repentance unto life?  
Repentance unto life is a saving grace wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and word of God, whereby, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, he so grieves for and hates his sins, as that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavouring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience.
  - D. Thus, the Fear of the Lord is the motivation that fuels the put off/put on dynamic.
- IV. Therefore, you must learn the Fear of the Lord.
  - A. The Fear of the Lord: What it is and is not
  - B. The Fear of the Lord: its implications for counseling
  - C. The Fear of the Lord: how to teach it

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## Exposition of the Word

- I. The Fear of the Lord: what it is.
  - A. What it is not.
    1. Abject fear
    2. Fear that drives you from God
    3. Fear of consequences alone
    4. Fear that enslaves
  - B. What it is.
    1. A respect and awe of God's holiness, power and love. Ex 20:20; Deut 13:4; Is 8:11-22; (9:1-7); 11:1-5, Christ will be filled with this Fear; 33:5-6, the Fear of the Lord is a treasure; 1 John 4:18.
    2. A motivation to avoid God's discipline and to please Him as Father. Heb 12:1-11; 18-29.
    3. Brief descriptions:
      - a. Deut 13:3-4 A covenant call to cling to Him
      - b. Deut 10:12-22 Walk in His ways....
      - c. Prov 8:13 to hate evil...
      - d. Prov 9:10 a blessing that starts wisdom; insight comes from the knowledge of God
      - e. Prov 14:26-27 it protects and refreshes you
      - f. Pm 86:8-13; Rev 14:7 part of worship
      - g. Job 28:28 both the positive and negative
      - h. Pm 19:9 the Fear of the Lord is eternal
- II. The Fear of the Lord: implications for counseling
  - A. The lack of this fear leads to sin: Gen 20:11; Pm 36:1; Rom 3:18.
  - B. The lack of this fear leads to the bad kind of fear which enslaves the fearer!
    1. Prov 29:25; Is 29:13; Prov 28:1. Man centered fear enslaves the fearer.
    2. Prov 10:24; Matt 25:25-30; Rev 21:8. These become pagan/idolatrous replacements for God!
    3. Heb 2:14-15; 1 John 4:18. The mega-fear of condemnation feeds these fears and are Satanic at root.
  - C. The fear of the Lord frees from these bad fears. Pm 118:4.
- III. The Fear of the Lord: how to learn/teach it.
  - A. Is 11:2; Rom 8:15: The Holy Spirit teaches you to delight in the Fear of the Lord as a child of God.
  - B. Pm 119:30; Josh 1:6-9; Is 8:12ff; 1 Pet 3:10-15: The Holy Spirit uses His words as His tool.
  - C. **Westminster Confession of Faith: Chapter 14. Of Saving Faith**
    1. The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word; by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.

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2. By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principle acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.
  3. This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed and weakened, but gets the victory; growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.
- D. ***Westminster Confession of Faith: Chapter 15. Of Repentance unto Life***
1. Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.
  2. By it a sinner, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavouring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.
  3. Although repentance be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ; yet is it of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.
  4. As there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.
  5. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins particularly.
  6. AS every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof; upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy; so he that scandalizeth his brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing, by private or publick confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended; who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.

## Exhortation for Life

- I. You need the fear of the Lord before you counsel anyone.
  - A. See my workshop on ***Attributes of a Christ-like Counselor***.
  - B. You need true faith, repentance and walking with God.
- II. You need to center your counseling on God, His fear and His word.

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- III. Study the above scriptures.
  - A. Study them until you fear the Lord.
  - B. Study the following
    - 1. Frank, Arnold L. ***The Fear of God: A Forgotten Doctrine. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed*** (Ventura: Nordskog Publishing, 2007, 2008)
    - 2. Martin, Albert N. ***The Forgotten Fear: Where Have All the God Fearers Gone?*** (Grand Rapids: Christian Heritage Books, 2015)
    - 3. The lesson on fear in my ***Introduction to Biblical Counseling.***
- IV. Biblical Counseling must fear the Lord or die under His hand of judgment. This is what the BCM needs as well as the Church at large and Western culture. There will be no change nor motivation to change apart from this fear. God have mercy on us.