



## Raising our Reverence Pt 2: The Fear of God

March 8, 2020

### **Theme for the month of March and our Text today: Hebrews 12:28-29**

Last week, we looked at The Holiness of God from Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:13-16.

One of the best ways to become healthier as a church is to focus on those parts of God's character that move us "up and away" from ourselves. Why? Because worship, by definition, is about God and not us, and that is what we come together to do: worship.

We found out that our God is holy, or "set apart;" that holiness is that part of God's character that distinguishes Him from any created thing in purity and absolute righteousness. In fact, there is no "right" apart from God; no "pure" unless it's in comparison to Him. He is the standard of "good" and "perfect."

As it relates to *Raising our Reverence*, these truths are healthy for us. Again, because:

- His holiness focuses us on His majesty and not ourselves.
- His holiness makes us aware of our deep need for practical cleansing.
- His holiness helps us understand our own unworthiness. Worship is connected to His worthiness.
- His holiness produces fear and trembling, carefulness and propriety in worship—a good and healthy thing!
- His holiness, rightly understood, changes the way we see things. In worship, we are lifted to heaven and into His throne room; we leave the worldly or carnal behind...another healthy thing! :)

### **Our Text:**

1. Our text commands Christians to "have grace" or to be **grateful**. Why? The context tells us:
  - First, because we are receiving an unmoveable Kingdom; that is, we have been redeemed and made heirs! We, by faith and Christ's blood, have been made sons and daughters of the King!
  - **Matthew 25:32-34 (KJV)** *And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*
  - And there's more...
2. If we go back a bit further in the chapter, we find out that:
  - We have come, not to Mount Sinai but to Mount Zion! (v18-22) We are no longer in fear for our lives in His Presence; we long to be there and a new and living way has been made! (Heb 10:20)

- We have come to the heavenly Jerusalem! (v22)

“We do not come to a tangible mountain on earth. Our privilege is to enter the sanctuary in heaven. By faith, we approach God in confession, praise, and prayer. We are not limited to one day of the year, but may enter the holiest at any time with the knowledge that we are always welcome. God no longer says, “Stay at a distance”; He says, “Come near with confidence.”

Law has its Mount Sinai but faith has its **Mount Zion**. This heavenly mountain symbolizes the combined blessings of grace—all that is ours through the redeeming work of Christ Jesus.

Law has its earthly Jerusalem but faith has its **heavenly** capital above. **The city of the living God** is in heaven, the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God.” -William MacDonald

- As we worship, we are in the company of “an innumerable company of angels!” (v22)
  - We are the “general assembly of the firstborn; our names are written in heaven!” (v23; Rom 8:29)
  - We join with the OT saints in our worship! (v23, “spirits of just men made perfect”)
  - We have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant! (v24)
  - We therefore must never refuse Him! (v25-26)
  - We worship in “spirit!” Earthly things are shaken; heavenly, eternal things are not!
  - We are citizens of a Kingdom which cannot be moved! (v28) Our worship matters for time and eternity! Our current reality is a foretaste of the glory to come!
3. As result of the great and glorious things God has done for us, we are to offer God acceptable worship with reverence and godly fear because our God is a consuming fire!
  4. Let us look again at verses 28-29:

### Serve

1. The word for serve in verse 28 of our Text is *latreuō*. It can be translated “worship” but is mostly translated “serve” in the New Testament.
2. It means “to serve for hire,” or “to render religious homage.”
3. The connotation suggests **obligation**; this sort of service (or worship) is compelled by something outside the worshipper. The sense of the word usage is: “You have no choice. This is something you must do as if you have been hired to do it.”
4. This definition and idea (that God must be worshipped instead of having a choice) brings balance to our modern “me” mindset that we worship to get something.

### Reverence

1. This word in Heb 12:28 in Greek is “*aidōs*” and carries the ideas of “*downcast eyes, bashfulness, modesty or shamefacedness.*”
2. Like other words translated as “reverence” in Scripture, it implies, “*A fear mingled with respect and affection. The fear acceptable to God is a filial (or childlike) fear, an awful reverence of the divine*”

*nature, proceeding from a just esteem of his perfections, which produces in us an inclination to his service and an unwillingness to offend him.” – Webster 1828*

3. To reverence God acceptably is to have a heart that is:
  - Aware of one’s own sin, and is therefore not overly proud or boastful.
  - Modest...seeking to place all attention upon Christ in every way.
  - Childlike in faith and fear, simply willing to obey God.
  - Unwilling to **offend** Him!
4. Interestingly, *aidōs* is used in only one other place in the NT:
  - **1 Timothy 2:9-10 (KJV)** *In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; **10** But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.*
5. And dear friends, let there be no doubt that our God is worthy of this sort of humble, penitent, reverence!

### **Godly Fear**

1. In our day, we can sometimes be put off by the word “fear” as it applies to God, despite the fact that Scripture says:
  - *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* **Proverbs 1:7 (KJV)**
  - *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."* **Proverbs 9:10 (KJV)**
  - *"The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."* **Proverbs 14:27 (KJV)**
  - *"The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil."* **Proverbs 19:23 (KJV)**
  - *"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."* **1 Peter 2:17 (KJV)**
  - *"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."* **Revelation 15:4 (KJV)**
2. First, what is the fear of the LORD?
  - *The fear of the Lord is the love, reverence, awe and passion that prompt the believer to obey God. It is that state of mental and emotional sanctification where the believer sees God as holy and a reverent trembling results. It is the necessary characteristic of Christian discipleship where total obedience to the commands of Christ is seen as a loving response to a loving God.*
  - *It is a behavioral restraining element even in the heart of those who do not follow Christ. In other words, it is a cultural acknowledgment within man’s conscience of the Law of God (Ro 2:15). It is a necessary component of any Godly and moral society.*
  - *It is the understanding that God will one day judge the earth and all who ever lived.*
3. The word for fear in our text is from the Greek, “*eulabeia*,” which means, “*caution*,” and carries the connotation of *reverence (piety)* and by implication *dread or fear*. The ESV renders it “*awe*.”

According to Thayer's dictionary, other terms associated with this word are *circumspection* and *discretion*.

- To be *circumspect* is to be "prudent; watchful on all sides; examining carefully all the circumstances that may affect a determination." -Webster 1828
  - To have *discretion* is to have "that discernment which enables a person to judge critically of what is correct and proper." -Webster 1828
4. This kind of fear is a circumspect, careful passion; it is controlled and biblically-governed in its forms and expressions; it implies hearts that are prayerfully prepared having thought through what honors God instead of man.

### **Our God, a Consuming Fire!**

1. Reverence and godly fear are commanded because our God is a consuming fire! Several Old Testament examples come to mind:
  - **Aaron's Sin Offering:** *Leviticus 9:23-24 (KJV)* *And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people. 24 And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.*
  - **Nadab and Abihu's unauthorized fire:** *Leviticus 10:1-2 (KJV)* *And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. 2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.*
  - **Israel's grumbling and complaining after leaving Sinai:** *Numbers 11:1 (KJV)* *And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.*
  - **The Rebellion of Korah and his men:** *Numbers 16:35 (KJV)* *And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.*
  - **Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal:** *1 Kings 18:38-40 (KJV)* *Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. 40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*
2. What do we learn from all this? That God is a God of **order**: that there is worship that is acceptable to Him and worship that is NOT!
3. Of course, in Christ, we are not likely to be subject to such harsh judgment. Mathew Henry wrote on these verses:
  - "We cannot worship God acceptably, unless we worship him with *godly reverence and fear*. As faith, so holy fear, is necessary to acceptable worship. It is only the grace of God that enables us to worship God in a right manner: nature cannot come up to it; it can produce neither that precious faith nor that holy fear that is necessary to acceptable worship. God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel that he appeared to be under the law. Though he be our

God in Christ, and now deals with us in a more kind and gracious way, yet he is in himself a consuming fire; that is, a God of strict justice, who will avenge himself on all the despisers of his grace, and upon all apostates. Under the gospel, the justice of God is displayed in a more awful manner, though not in so sensible a manner as under the law; for here we behold divine justice seizing upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and making him a propitiatory sacrifice, his soul and body an offering for sin, which is a display of justice far beyond what was seen and heard on mount Sinai when the law was given.

4. But what we should take away from our Text is a desire to **search** out that which pleases Him, even from a New Testament perspective.
5. Not legalism. Not man-made ritual. Not praise that lacks joy or worship that lacks authenticity. But hearts that burn for Him and minds thinking through the lens of Scripture to please Him.

**Final Questions for Thought:**

1. Do you fear God? How would you know?
2. Have you taught your family to fear God?
3. Discuss in family worship: How would society/culture and church be different if we truly feared God?
4. What might the fear of God do to our arrogance and pride?
5. What things can you do to begin walking in a healthier fear of God today?