

The Fear of the Lord – Part 3

There are none so blind as those who refuse to see. You know, in the spiritual realm, that's what blindness is. Oh, there is certainly inherited spiritual blindness. We're born in Adam and have a sin nature that does not fear God, **Romans 3** tells us. And we know that Satan furthers the blindness according to **2 Corinthians 4:4**. But spiritual blindness is also a refusal to see.

We said in Part 1 and 2 of this series that the fear of the Lord is spiritually seeing God everywhere. Realising He is Here, and He is who He is: powerful, light, and love. When I do not see it, it is not because God has left, or is not here, or is unable to be seen. It is because spiritually speaking, I often refuse to see. Through hardness of heart, through spiritual immaturity, through sin, I do not see God in the picture. The Bible lists this attitude in a few places.

...who hold [suppress] the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse...

Romans 1:18-20

They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water.

Peter 3:5

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Matthew 13:13

You can have your eyes wide open and yet not see reality. When you consistently understand who God is and that He is here – you will have the fear of the Lord. In Part 2, we saw that the fear of the Lord sanctifies you. We now explore how the fear of the Lord strengthens you.

Strengthening

In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.

Proverbs 14:26

In **2 Kings 6:8-18** we find an example of how the fear of the Lord should affect us. In this passage, the Syrian king wants to kill Elisha. Elisha receives prophetic revelation on where the king of Syria is lying in wait. He passes this on to the king of Israel so he can

save himself. The king of Syria is annoyed how at this information is being passed around, so he arranges for a military strike on Elisha's dwelling place.

When Elisha's servant hears, he is in fear – but not the fear of the Lord, simply fear of man. All he can see is the problem; the physical situation facing him. All he could say was “Alas! How shall we do?” He sounds a bit like us. He does not see through the situation to the fact that God is here, just as we often only see the army of the Syrians.

We see only the financial problem. Only the relationship struggle. Only the failures we're having in our Christian walk. We see a besetting sin in our lives that we just can't seem to shake. We see the mountain of a health problem, or an emotional one, or a work-related one, or a family one, or a spiritual one. We see only the massive tasks before us – be it in our marriage, our family, our church, our ministry, our work.

We look at the situation, at the tasks, at the problems and we say – how can we do this? This will take more resources than we have. I am outnumbered. We assess our lives without the fear of God. We see the situation, and then we look within – do I have the power? We look perhaps to our bank account, perhaps to another human, and we shake our heads. We say, “I'm not going to make it. I'm defeated before I start. I can't win. The odds are against me.”

Just like Elisha's servant. He saw the situation and assessed it as you would if you were an unbeliever. A Syrian army, armed soldiers with weapons against a little town of Israel, specifically targeting an old prophet and his nervous sidekick – this is a no-brainer. Let's begin digging the prophet's grave, and send word back to the king of Syria – mission accomplished! But that is not the case.

Elisha does not seem worried, and never was. Elisha was aware of something that his servant wasn't, because he says, “Fear not.” How could Elisha say that? Did he know some fatal flaw in the Syrian army? Did he secretly have Israelite soldiers hiding in the town? No, he says, “They that be with us are more than they that be with them.” In other words, it's not us who are outnumbered, it's them.

They are the ones with the problem. We are stronger than they are. We don't have a weakness problem, or a manpower problem, we are not in danger, threatened, or lacking in anything. Elisha's servant probably looks at him as if he has lost all sense. Elisha then prays, “Lord open his eyes, that he may see.” Whether or not Elisha himself saw it, we're not told. The fact is Elisha knew it, and asked that his servant could see with his physical eyes what Elisha could see spiritually.

God grants Elisha's prayer, and what does the servant see? *“The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha,”* (2 Kings 6:17-18). He sees the power and might of God exercised toward and in the protection of Elisha. He sees God's ability, and is strengthened.

Elisha was strong all along. Why? Because he was practicing the presence of the Lord. He was living in the fear of God. He realised God is here. God is powerful. He is mighty. He is omnipotent. He is Sovereign. Just like Isaiah, seeing who God is likely caused Elisha to think about himself. He realised how weak and lacking in ability he was. He realised how frail, how small, how unable he was. He then turned to trust fully in the power of God. He depended totally upon the Lord – and the result is that he was strengthened.

The difference between one man being weak and another strong was the fear of the Lord – the belief that God is here. One saw, “I am weak, He is mighty, so I trust in God” while the other man saw only, “I am weak.”

That is how most people, and sadly many Christians, live. They face a problem and say – I am weak. Then they seek to grow strong on their own, or overcome their own weakness, or push through their inability – only to fail some more. All the while, God is standing right there – ready to strengthen those who will admit their weakness before Him.

Practising the presence of a powerful God who is willing to help you is the difference between energetic, enthusiastic Christians, and burnt out, weary ones. It is the difference between anxious, tense Christians, and calm, trusting Christians. It is the difference between proud, self-sufficient Christians, and humble, satisfied-in-God Christians. It is the difference between the strength of man, and the strength of God.

When we realise the power and might of God, and compare it to our true status as weak, dependent creatures, we will react correctly with trusting dependence. Consider some verses which teach how strong God is, and how weak and dependent we are.

1. For presence itself

“Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being” says **Acts 17:25**. The very life and breath you have is dependent on God. Like our work grinds to a halt when there is a power failure, so our lives would snuff out if God refused to continue to sustain our lives.

Do you ever stop to think – the one keeping my heart beating is here? **Colossians 1:17** says, *“And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.”* By Him, Jesus, all things hold together. He is the reason your atoms don't fly apart. Do you ever think – the One who holds me together is here? What is the correct reaction to that thought? Dependence. Realising the source of your strength of life is God.

2. For provision

Psalms 104:28-29 says *“That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.”* Every living thing on earth, including you, receives its daily

portion of food from God. This is the whole reason behind praying *"Give us this day our daily bread"* (**Matthew 6:11**). This is the reason behind thanking God before you eat. God is the one who gives or withholds.

Imagine if there was one giant storehouse in the world, where every human had to go to get their food, and one person was in charge of that storehouse. What would be your attitude toward that person? I'd say humble dependence. This person decides whether you live or starve. Well, did you ever consider that the One who gives food to every person is here? What is the correct reaction to that? Dependence. Realising your physical strength in food comes from the strength of God and being strengthened in Him.

3. For a path, plans and purposes

Proverbs 19:21 says *"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand."* **Proverbs 16:9** says, *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."* **Ecclesiastes 7:13** says *"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?"*

Do you realise that the path you take, the direction of your life, is in the hands of God. God decides what happens. That's why **James 4:15** says we shouldn't just say we will do this or that, rather, 'if the Lord wills, we will do this or that,' because you don't know what a day may bring forth.

If the fate of today and tomorrow is in the hand of the Lord – what should our reaction be to Him? Dependence. Finding strength in the fact that He is sovereign. He is the Shepherd leading the way. He has the route planned. He has the circumstances laid out. What should be the attitude we have when we realise God is here – and God is the driver of my life? Dependence, trust. Finding strength that He is steering the ship.

4. For protection

A thousand possible dangers face us every day. On the roads, accidents in the home or at work, crime, and evildoers around us. Threats and dangers abound. This is really the heart of what Elisha and his servant faced. They were at risk – threatened with death by evildoers. The difference between Elisha and his servant was Elisha gained strength from fearing the Lord, while his servant felt weak. Elisha recognised his own weakness, but realised God is here, and God protects His own.

Time would fail us to mention all the Psalms which describe God as a shield, a rock, a high tower, a fortress, a defender. He is the source of our protection finally. Not our security systems, not our caution, not our trackers, not even our leaving dangerous areas or countries. Though those things can be wise and useful, **Proverbs 21:30** tells us: *"The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."*

God is the final source of protection. That's why the fear of man is the opposite of the fear of God. You cannot be fearing God and fearing man at the same time. Fearing what

man can do to you is being like Elisha's servant – it is neglecting God as a factor. In Hebrews this is exactly what God says:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Hebrews 13:5-6

God is here. He is with and will not leave me – that is why I do not have to fear men. Jesus summed it up for us in **Matthew 10:27**: “*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*”

What did God keep saying to Israel? “*Be strong, and of a good courage, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest*” (**Joshua 1:9**). If we fear God, if we say, ‘God is here, and He is powerful, and He will exercise that power on behalf of His children,’ what is the result? We depend on Him. We trust Him, and we gain strength from it.

Psalms 34:7 says, “*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth.*” Listen to why God protects: “*Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name,*” **Psalms 91:14**. God delights to protect those who love Him, because He gets the glory as their protector.

5. For power

What about just the weakness of our bodies? What about the fatigue and sheer strain of our responsibilities? What about the strength we need just to carry on? God is the source of that as well. When Paul was faced with a thorn in his flesh, what did he do? Did he just sigh, grumble or complain? No, he prayed, and God said to him, “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness,*” (**2 Corinthians 12:9**).

Psalms 145:14 says, “*The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.*” And how many times does the Psalmist say ‘the Lord is my strength’? But we are like a little child, trying to pick up a 5kg weight ourselves, while his bodybuilder daddy stands right next to him. Just ask!

What relationship exists between high-profile people and their bodyguards? How are they when in the presence of their bodyguards? They trust and depend on them, and gain strength from the fact that those men are trained to protect them. They can carry on with other tasks, since their safety is the responsibility of another. Well, God is always here. And not only is God able to help, He is willing!

Ephesians 3:20 says, “*Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.*” Paul tells Timothy to be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus. Not in yourself, but in Him. If you will but practice

the presence of God, and realise He is your strength – you will trust, and be strengthened. Worn-out, burnt out, consistently weak Christians are as ironic as a house built next to a power station, but without lights. So much power available, yet it is never called upon.

6. For progress

Most importantly, what about progress in the Christian life? Where is the power to go forward spiritually? Jesus put it simply in **John 15:4-6**: *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”*

Spiritual victory and progress comes from drawing upon the strength of God, not upon our own sense of discipline, commitment or ability. Paul prayed in **Colossians 1:10-11**: *“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”*

Strengthened with all might – according to His glorious power! These are strong words! If my only hope of doing anything worthwhile spiritually, if my only hope of growing spiritually, is totally up to Him, what should my response be to Him? Trust, dependence. Gaining strength from the fact that He is at work, and He promises to finish the work He began in me.

God is the source of my Presence on earth. He is the source of my daily provision. He is the source of the path my life takes. He is the source of protection along the way. He is the source of power for all my activities. He is the source of progress in spiritual life. That just about sums up every possible angle of your existence. If we realise God is the source of these things – and He is here – then what is the reaction? Trust – dependence, and strengthening.

So first we saw what happens when a person sees God is here, and He is holy and merciful. You then realise, ‘I am a sinner, I need to repent, have faith in God and His Word and be sanctified.’ Now we see what happens when a person realises that God is here, and He is the Creator. You then realise, ‘I am a creature – I need to depend on Him and be strengthened.’

Do you know why God creates these situations in our lives? Do you know why He reminds you of your mortality, or gives you lean times financially, or causes you to feel weak and overburdened, or brings in dangerous, threatening situations, or makes your future seem unclear, or makes you see how impossible the Christian life is? So that you will see He is standing right there – ready to show His strength on behalf of those who admit they are weak.

God creates these situations, otherwise man in his pride will not look up once. God wants to take your concept of Him out of the theory books and into the classroom of life. He wants you to see Him in reality. He is here! He is real! He works!

2 Chronicles 16:9 says, *"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong on the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."* Those words were said as a rebuke to a king – King Asa – who had previously made God his strength, but then backslid into trusting his own means. His son Jehoshaphat learned the right lesson.

And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, and said, 'O LORD God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? And rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not Thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend for ever?... O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.'

2 Chronicles 20:5-8

That's the attitude of the fear of the Lord. 'Lord, we know our lack of strength. But we know You are here, and are strong. So our eyes are on You.' It's not that we do nothing, but it's the source of our strength to do what we must do that we are talking about.

So, in a nutshell, how do you express this trust, this dependence? How do I say, 'Yes God, you are here, you are the source of my presence, my provision, my paths, my power, my protections, my progress?' Well, how do you say anything to God? Prayer. Prayer is the ultimate statement of dependence. How often are we to be in the fear of the Lord? Always. Then how often are we to pray? Always.

You say, 'That's impossible.' Who did we say is the source of the fear of the Lord? The Spirit. He'll lay it on your heart. You just co-operate with Him. How often does the Bible say we should pray? Pray without ceasing. So here's the bottom line from **Romans 8:31-32**: *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"*