

THE FEAR OF GOD

David Baker – Toowoomba Word Ministry – 25 July 2022

[Slightly edited transcription]

Good morning. What I would like to do this morning is to just meditate on what is part of the word of the season, and that is around the fear of the Lord. We will just introduce a few thoughts.

This is a very sobering consideration, while at the same time it is very securing.

I think you will find this very securing if you are a God-fearer. But it is a very sobering consideration.

When you begin to look at the fear of the Lord, it must be one of the most comprehensive and extensive themes in the Scriptures.

Solomon's 'conclusion of the whole matter'

–fear God and keep His commandments

I was reflecting a little bit, just by way of introduction, on the words of Solomon, when he considered all things under heaven and on the earth, and every facet of life, every activity of man under the sun, and he concluded by saying:

Ecc 12:13. 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter'.

That is a fairly profound statement, isn't it?

'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this applies to every man.'

It is all encompassing as well. Fear God, keep His commandments, for this applies to every man.

This morning, will just be a skeleton. I will nominate the key points as we begin and then I will just put a little bit of flesh on the bone, but we won't have time to put much flesh on the bone. So there will be a need to continue to put flesh on the bone. But we will see how we go, and if we only have a half-built skeleton in our time then we will continue on another week.

Even just thinking of the definition of the fear of the Lord, how would you define the fear of the Lord?

The fear of the Lord is His fear –that becomes our fear

We begin by saying that the fear of the Lord is *His* fear. It is His fear. It belongs to Him. And then it becomes our fear.

I just love this verse in Isaiah:

Stability in our times

Isa 33:6. 'Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times.'

This is to you, today. Remember that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. And this will be the stability of your times so that you are not 'tossed to and fro' based on the events of the week or what is happening in the world around you.

'Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is *His* treasure.'

So the fear of the Lord belongs to the Lord and then it becomes our fear. I will just define it this way as we begin. I am sure that this is not adequate. It is very difficult to articulate what the fear of the Lord is, but we will begin this way.

Full awareness and complete appreciation of who the Lord is

It is the full awareness and the complete appreciation (now 'appreciation' is not an adequate word) but it is the full awareness and the complete appreciation of who the Lord is.

It is an understanding of His holiness and His holy ground, the holy ground of the fellowship of *Yahweh*, which is where we see the fear of the Lord.

So, we are beginning to receive and learn the fear of the Lord when we are becoming aware and appreciating the nature of who the Lord is.

His holiness

–His jealous love, and wrath

From our perspective, when we appreciate His holiness, we do understand His jealous love for our sanctification as sons of God, and His wrath on our sin and uncleanness. His jealous love is His wrath on our sin and uncleanness.

There is nothing more pure, nothing more holy, nothing more just, nothing more righteous than His wrath upon our sin. That is quite a remarkable consideration. *Selah* on that point.

These are my key points this morning.

We receive or learn the fear of the Lord –the outcome of meeting Christ

Receiving the fear of the Lord, which is not natural to us, is the outcome of meeting Christ eye to eye.

The Scripture tells us that we are to learn the fear of the Lord because it is not something we naturally have. We are to receive it. We are to learn it.

And the way we learn it is by continuing to meet Christ eye to eye, because that is the only way to receive it and learn it.

We do not learn the fear of the Lord by learning *about* the Lord. That is not what I am talking about. Theology cannot do this for us. It is only by *meeting* Him. It is a relational interaction.

We learn the fear of the Lord by meeting Him.

The evidence of receiving the fear of the Lord –summarised in obedience

The evidence that we are receiving the fear of the Lord will be our cry for mercy. This is where it begins. It will be our cry for mercy.

And this will be followed by what we could say are the fruits of the fear of the Lord in a person's life.

How do you recognise a God-fearer? There will be a cry for mercy, which is the cry of a person who is bankrupt in spirit.

This will be followed by our commitment to the fellowship of the word, as those who tremble at His word.

The moment I make these points, you will be thinking of a number of Scriptures, and we won't have time to read them all today. But we will endeavour to put the skeleton in place.

So, the first fruit of the fear of the Lord in a person's life is not self-righteousness. It is the cry for mercy, followed by a commitment to the fellowship of the word, our commitment to deal with uncleanness, and our commitment to our own sanctification as a son of God.

So, it is obedience. You can summarise it by saying that the fruit of the fear of the Lord in a person's life is obedience to the Lord.

The fear of the Lord becomes our protection

–He will become for us a sanctuary

Now this is where I am going this morning. I may not have time to develop this, but just so you know where I am heading and why I am looking at this – the fear of the Lord becomes our protection.

Pro 14:26. 'In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.'

This is under the shadow of His wings.

This next verse is where I began in terms of the consideration.

Isa 8:13. 'The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow [or regard as holy]; Let Him be your fear and let Him be your dread.'

Vs14. 'He will be as [or He will become] a sanctuary.'

If you are a God-fearer and He is your fear and your dread, then He becomes for you a sanctuary, meaning that there is protection for those who fear God.

Three dimensions of His protection

There are a number of dimensions to His protection.

–protected from oppression of unclean spirits

Firstly, if we are dealing with uncleanness, then we will be protected from the oppression of unclean spirits.

If you would like to be protected from the oppression of unclean spirits, and that is in your family and also in the world, then we need to deal with uncleanness and the uncleanness that the Lord is bringing to our attention. Because that is what the unclean spirits feed upon and energise in your life.

–protected from His judgement upon the world

Secondly, if we are committed to our sanctification as sons of God, and we are confessing that the lines have fallen for us in pleasant places and we have a beautiful inheritance from the Lord and it is right on Mount Zion, and if we are abiding within the lines of our sanctification as sons of God, then we will be protected from the judgement of God upon the world.

That is another degree of protection. Once the Father takes His seat in the days ahead of us, He will make a very big distinction between the world and those who belong to Mount Zion or the heavenly Jerusalem.

–protected from the world

Thirdly, if we are God-fearers, we will be protected from the world.

This is a very interesting and extensive theme, because God will place the fear of God upon the inhabitants of the world.

It is not that they are God-fearers as an outcome of meeting Christ eye to eye and heart to heart. But because we are God-fearers, God will place the fear of God upon those around us so that they don't touch us. They will have no capacity to harm us.

Everything that is happening to us we know is limited by the Lord's hand upon us and is exactly what we need in terms of circumcising the other law from our heart.

And then, of course, the persecution that the church experiences is also part of its evangelistic ministry. But all of these things are limited by the Lord. So these are very interesting themes.

I will just put a little bit of flesh on the bone now.

The fear of the Lord, or the fear of death

I will begin with receiving the fear of the Lord.

As I said, we must receive the fear of the Lord because we do not naturally possess it. What we naturally possess is the fear of death, which is the outcome of the Fall.

When Adam fell, he was cut off from the life of God so that he and his wife, and the whole natural creation, were plunged into a desperate struggle for survival.

Life is now a limited resource. Everything is competing for life, and this includes mankind. Man is desirous of using every resource that he can possibly lay his hands on to find and sustain his own life.

Man is now motivated by the desire for life and also the fear of death. This is now inherent in, or just a part of, every person. This is what is motivating every person in the world; the desire to find life, find satisfaction, find fulfillment, create a name, and to also avoid pain, avoid suffering, and avoid death.

In the end, there are really only two kinds of fear. That is what I am saying. It is the fear of death or it is the fear of the Lord.

It is important to state that fairly plainly, because if you are not motivated by the fear of the Lord, you will be motivated by the fear of death.

Different manifestations of the fear of death

But the fear of death wears many masks. There are many different manifestations of the fear of death.

It does not necessarily mean that, when you put your head on your pillow at night, you are fearful of not waking up tomorrow morning. That would be a very acute manifestation of the fear of death, but it does not always look like that.

What it generally looks like through the course of a person's life is anxiety, fear about something bad happening, or the fear of something good not happening, whatever the case may be. Or it is the fear of missing out. Or it is the fear of failure, or the fear of looking bad. Or it is the fear of being found out.

All of these are various manifestations of the fear of death. And Satan uses the fear of death to hold every person in bondage to the law of sin. By this means, he is the ruler of the world.

It is really apparent that the unbeliever does not fear God. David said in the Psalms that 'there is no fear of God before his eyes.' Psa 36:1. That is a very interesting statement.

The only way we receive the fear of the Lord is by meeting Christ eye to eye. If we have not met Christ eye to eye, there will be no fear of God before our eyes.

So it is very apparent that the unbeliever does not fear God, however this statement is equally relevant for the religious person.

The fear of death in the religious person

The religious person will often be motivated by the fear of death and not the fear of God. Their religious service is motivated by their desire (so we will just increase the stakes here) to escape hell and go to heaven.

That would be the ultimate manifestation of the fear of death and the desire to find life; escape hell and go to heaven.

This is the same dynamic as the unbeliever in the world, in terms of what is motivating it.

Isa 29:13. 'Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honour Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me..."'

This is not the fear of the Lord. This is the fear of death manifesting itself as a fear of God.

'...their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.'

And this is not how we receive the fear of the Lord. It is not possible to receive it by the commandment of men. So how do we receive it? That is the critical question.

We receive the fear of the Lord by meeting Christ eye to eye

We do not receive it through the commandments of men. We do not receive it by learning about God.

The only way that we receive the fear of the God is by meeting Christ eye to eye.

Now, this is a very obvious statement to make.

Peter, for all of his religious service and all of his zealous desire to serve God, was not a God-fearer until he met Christ eye to eye and heart to heart.

How do we know that he was not a God-fearer? It was because he was always arguing with what Jesus said. Now it wasn't with *everything* Jesus said, but whenever what Jesus was saying conflicted with what Peter thought, he immediately reacted. That demonstrated that he was not yet a God-fearer.

After Jesus began to explain to Peter and all of the disciples that He *must* go to Jerusalem and *must* suffer at the hands of men, and He *must* die and be raised after three days and three nights, Peter pulled Him aside and began rebuking Him. That is not the conversation of a God-fearer!

Then at the last supper when Jesus said to him, 'You are going to deny Me three times Peter', Peter effectively said to Him, 'That is not true. You are mistaken. You are wrong.' That is not the activity or conversation of a God-fearer.

So Peter did not become a God-fearer until he met Christ eye to eye. And this is true for all of us, regardless of how long we have been following the

Lord or serving Him, from our own perspective, faithfully.

When He meets us with eyes like a flame of fire

-He has fully identified with us

When we meet Christ eye to eye, His eyes are like a flame of fire. This is true when John met Christ in Revelation Chapter 1, in terms of the various elements of His priesthood. And He is meeting us as our great High Priest, but His eyes are like a flame of fire. This is also true when you see Him riding on the red horse, coming to judge the world.

When the Lord meets us with eyes like a flame of fire, He firstly meets us as our Judge, when His eyes reveal His wrath upon our sin and uncleanness.

God has appointed Jesus Christ to be our Judge because He is the One who has personally endured our eternal judgement for the sake of our salvation.

So, when Christ meets you with eyes like a flame of fire and reveals His wrath upon your sin and uncleanness, He is not doing that as an external observer. He is doing it from the perspective of having fully identified with your sin and your uncleanness, and having suffered under the eternal judgement of God, *because of* your sin and my sin and our uncleanness.

He is meeting us, fully identifying with us, not as an external observer. In the first case, His eyes *do* reveal His wrath. This is 'His eyes like a flame of fire'. God has appointed Jesus Christ to be our Judge because He is the One who has personally endured our eternal judgement for the sake of our salvation.

God *has* answered all the suffering, pain, and injustice in the world in Christ's offering journey

I often muse when people, and this propensity is in all of us, wave fists at God or make observations concerning the world and say, 'If God is a God of love, why is there so much suffering, pain, and injustice in the world?'

We make that statement from our own self-righteous perspective, having every other person under our judgement, including God Himself, not recognising that, actually, the biggest cause of the problem is in our own heart.

But I am just musing on the point that whatever sense of righteous indignation a person may think

they have, when they look at the world and all of the absolute abomination that happens in the world, God is far more angry, upset, and grieved about what is happening in the world than any person could ever hope to be.

His wrath on the sin and uncleanness that is in the world, as I said earlier, is the most righteous, the most true, the most just, the most pure manifestation of jealous love that there is.

And so, for the person waving their fist at God saying, 'Doesn't He see what is happening? If there is a God, wouldn't He do something about it', well the answer for that is that *He has!*

He has put an end to it. He has dealt with it, and He has done it in the physical body of Jesus Christ.

He contained and constrained all sin, every sinner, in the physical body of Christ, and then He judged it in Christ. Jesus Christ took it out into the sea of God's forgetfulness so that it is dealt with and gone forever. So He *has* dealt with it.

Jesus Christ became the embodiment of sin in the garden of Gethsemane and He fully identified with us. And then He began to suffer under the judgement of God because of our sin and rebellion.

He went from the garden of Gethsemane and began to suffer at the hands of wicked men. And that is us. Through those wounding events there is a full and complete provision to deal with our iniquity, our rebellion, our identity dystrophy, our lameness, our aberrations, our pride, our transgressions. There was a full provision after six wounding events.

We know there was a full provision after six wounding events because, at midday, He had the discussion with the believing thief on the cross who, as a God-fearer, was crying out for mercy and asking to be remembered by Christ. And Christ said, 'Truly, today you will be with Me in paradise'.

So there was a full provision by midday on the day of His crucifixion to deal with every issue in my life and in your life. But that was not the end of His offering. He then went into three hours of darkness.

Mat 27:45. 'Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.'

That means the whole world. We are definitely not talking about a three-hour solar eclipse here. There

was darkness over the whole world because He struck the sun, right at the source of the natural creation. So there was darkness.

Vs46. 'And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"'

This was Christ speaking here as the embodiment of our sin and rebellion against God. But He was not asking that question the way we would ask that question. He was asking that question having fully identified with us.

From midday to 3 pm, Christ experienced the darkness of eternal exclusion, which the Scripture often refers to as 'outer darkness', and alienation from God, and from all men. He was completely alone.

So it was alienation from God and from all men. Do you notice that there was no discussion happening from midday to 3pm? There was no discussion with anybody. Christ was not even interfacing with those who were reviling Him. That all happened in the first three hours of the cross, between 9am and midday.

From midday onwards, He was completely alienated, completely alone. He was forgotten by God.

During those three hours He endured the eternal judgement and wrath of God upon our sin. He was in the lake of fire! In fact, His offering is what ignited the lake of fire as He took all of this out to be eternally judged.

The depths of Christ's love for us -alone and separated from God and all men

This is Psalm 88, which I love, and I want to read both parts, but we need to appreciate the first part before we can appreciate the second part.

This is an amazing Messianic psalm, speaking prophetically concerning the experience of Jesus Christ on the cross, between midday and 3pm, when darkness covered the whole world.

We are reading this from the perspective of Christ Himself.

Psa 88:4-7. 'I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, adrift among the dead [it's very pictorial

language; 'adrift', bound hand and foot with no capacity to communicate, and so on], like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and who are cut off from Your hand.

'You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the depths.'

This is revealing the depths of Christ's love for us, that He would go this far in identifying with us.

Vs8. 'Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. You have put away my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an abomination to them; I am shut up, and I cannot get out.'

This is part of the mercy of the Lord for us because this is where He has confined all of our sin and rebellion, for eternity, and made provision for it to come to an end for us.

His amazing eternal work done in His physical body

But before we talk about it coming to an end, we just need to highlight that this was eternal: 'I am shut up and I cannot get out'.

This is by Eternal Spirit. This is just a remarkable manifestation of Christ's Melchizedek priesthood; to be able to identify with us in this manner.

This was eternal. Christ fully identified with the pain, suffering, torment, judgement that any person will ever endure, for eternity.

This is talking about believers and unbelievers. So, this is true for each and every one of us here today.

Christ fully identified with your *eternal* judgement, which is remarkable because what is eternal, by very definition, is never ending and forever increasing, where the worm of corruption dies not.

God's wrath, which is focused on removing sin and uncleanness (and as I said before, this is the most pure, the most true, the most righteous manifestation of who the Lord is and His holiness); as the worm of corruption continues to increase, then the fire, which is seeking to extinguish that corruption, continues to increase and is never ending.

So, this is what Jesus experienced for each and every one of us over three hours; it was eternal but done within three hours. And it was in His physical body.

It is very important that it was in His physical body, because He had to do this as the Son of Man in His physical body, because every unbeliever will, finally, be cast into the lake of fire in their physical body.

Who can dwell with devouring fire? -by joining His offering and suffering

Isa 33:14. 'For sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?"'

This is just who the Lord is. The lake of fire is not a different fire from the fire of Yahweh, who is a consuming fire. Sin and uncleanness are completely incompatible with who He is.

So, Isaiah did ask the question, and rightly so, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire [who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings]".

We can only answer that question by joining the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings now, during the course of our lifetime, which is for us 'a little while', so that we can receive His life, and everything that is incompatible with who God is can be removed from us and left in the sea of God's forgetfulness, forever.

This is one of the most securing and faith-filled, hope-filled considerations, because Jesus Christ endured what is eternal, but He did it in time. He brought what was eternal into time and did it over the course of three hours in His physical body, for the sake of bringing it to an end for *every* believer.

This is an amazing element of His Melchizedek priesthood, for us. It had to be in His physical body, and it had to be in time, to bring it to an end.

But we have to lay hold of it in Christ's offering, otherwise there will be no end!

Do not fear those who can kill the body

Mat 10:28. 'And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.'

This is part of our awareness of who the Lord is.

We often make a big distinction concerning the fear of hell and, as I said before, if the fear of hell is just a manifestation of the fear of death in us, then that is not what we are talking about.

But the fear of God does include a healthy fear of hell, recognising that God is able to destroy both

body and soul in hell. This is part of who He is and is part of understanding who He is.

His offering as the Scapegoat and the Lord's Goat

There is no other way around this. Once we come to understand this, we see that the only provision of mercy for us, and the only way of salvation, is to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings over a finite period of time, which is the course of our life. It is joining the fellowship of those seven wounding events.

Jesus endured all of this in three hours – which, for Him, was ‘a little while’, which is a big theme in the Scriptures – as our sin offering, particularly as the Scapegoat. But death and hell could not hold Him because He was dying in obedience to the Father, He was dying willingly, and He was dying by the grace of God.

Also, as our sin offering, as the Lord's Goat now, He was coming back from the death of our sin. He was learning our obedience and fulfilling the works of our sonship. This is not just talking about the works of our sonship in this lifetime; it is the works of our sonship for eternity.

What is eternal all confined in Christ in three hours, ‘a little while’

Can I just lift up the significance of what is eternal all being confined into Christ over that three-hour time period, which the Bible calls ‘a little while’?

There was not a thing that any person who has ever lived will ever suffer for eternity, that Christ did not suffer for them during those three hours.

Equally, there is not a work that a son of God will do for eternity that Christ did not finish and accomplish for them during that three-hour period.

This was all Jesus Christ as Melchizedek, our great High Priest!

Working wonders for the ‘dead’

We will now read Psalm 88:10. So, having been confined and constrained in the pit:

Psa 88:10-12. ‘Will You work wonders [lit: miracles] for the dead?’

I don't think that there is any greater miracle than this; that Jesus Christ, in that place (which is the place where it was said ‘you are not My people’, the place where He was being cut off, was learning our

obedience and fulfilling the works of our sonship); in that place where it was said, ‘You are not My people’, right there it will be said of you, ‘You are the sons of the Living God.’ This is our salvation!

‘Will You work wonders [or, miracles] for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise You? Selah [think on this].

‘Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders [lit. ‘miracles’] be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?’

We can answer all of those questions, in Christ, with a resounding ‘Yes!’ This is exactly where His miracle for us is made known.

Understanding the depths and heights of His love

Jesus Christ meets us now with eyes like a flame of fire as our great High Priest. His eyes reveal His wrath upon our sin and uncleanness but, at the same time, they are revealing His great love for us as sons of God.

In this relational interaction, we understand the depths and the heights of His love for us.

A spirit of grace and supplication that enables us to hear and choose

Psa 103:17. ‘But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children.’

We know that when the word is proclaimed to us, it is accompanied by a spirit of grace and supplication.

The spirit of grace enables us to hear and gives us the freedom to choose to respond.

We have been considering this for quite some time; just the miraculous nature of the spirit of grace that accompanies the word that cuts you free, regardless of your history, whatever has happened through the course of your life, even the power of the other law in your heart, or your bondage to the law of sin.

It does not matter how strong all of those things are, when the word of God is proclaimed to you, it is accompanied by a spirit of grace, which cuts you free from every other influence so that you are free to respond to what the Lord is saying to you.

For this reason, every man is accountable for his response. But this is an amazing mercy of the Lord to us that He cuts us free in this manner and gives us the choice to respond.

The Spirit of the fear of the Lord poured out as an anointing –based on our choice

Let's go further with it.

We know that we respond to the word by turning to meet Christ, and if we are choosing to meet Him in this way, the Spirit of the fear of the Lord is beginning to be poured out upon us as an anointing.

I am making a distinction here between the anointing of it and then learning it, so that it becomes *our* possession or treasure.

But in the first case, as we choose to respond to the word and we turn to meet Christ eye to eye, the Spirit of the fear of the Lord begins to be poured out upon us as an anointing in this relational interaction, so that we do not draw back.

This is an anointing upon us, based on our choice to turn and meet Christ in this manner.

When we meet Christ eye to eye, *everything* in us, *everything* that is naturally in us, our impulse is to draw back, because we are not compatible with the Lord, in any way.

The sin and uncleanness that He is revealing in our heart is completely incompatible with His holiness, and so we feel completely open, exposed, and vulnerable when He meets us this way. And so everything within us is causing us to recoil, to draw back in shame.

It is only by the anointing of the fear of the Lord, which is completely different to every other fear.

As I said, in the end, there are only two, and the fear of death will cause 'fight or flight'.

But the fear of the Lord is what is causing you to draw near. It is completely different.

–so that we do not draw back

The Spirit of the fear of the Lord is poured out upon us in these relational interactions so that we do not draw back.

Pro 1:23. 'Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.' Or, he is saying, 'When I speak to you

and there is a spirit of grace and supplication that is enabling you to turn, choose to turn. Then as you begin to meet Me, surely, I will pour out My Spirit on you.'

In the first case, this is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord so that we do not recoil.

'I will make My words known to you.'

Able to choose the fear of the Lord

In this relational interaction, we have chosen to turn, and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord is poured out upon us as an anointing so that we do not draw back. And then we can choose, and we must choose, the fear of the Lord.

So, now we have to choose it. It is poured out as an anointing, but then we have to choose it. We have to choose the fear of the Lord.

Pro 1:29. 'Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord...'

Choose His fear by crying out for mercy and joining His offering

We choose the fear of the Lord by crying out for mercy; and then embracing our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as the provision of the mercy of God toward us. This is the mercy of God toward me.

Christ's offering is the full expression (there is nothing outside of this) of the Lord's mercy to me. So, when Christ meets me – eye to eye, heart to heart – I demonstrate the fear of the Lord by crying out for mercy. This is the first fruit.

I am choosing the fear of the Lord, then, as I run to Him and I lay hold of His provision of mercy to me.

We choose the fear of the Lord by crying out for mercy and then embracing our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as the provision of the mercy of God toward us.

THE FRUIT OF THE FEAR OF GOD

1. Crying out for mercy

We will just inventory now as we are running short of time. I will just nominate these.

The fruit of the fear of God in our life is that we firstly cry out for mercy.

We can illustrate that with the two thieves. The believing thief rebuked his unbelieving mate by saying, 'Do you not even fear God!'

The cry for mercy is the cry, 'Please remember me.' Because the two sides of Christ's offering are that the Scapegoat went out to the land of forgetfulness; but the Lord's Goat came back to be remembered. And so we cry out for mercy, saying, 'We want to be part of what is being remembered by You. Lord, remember me.'

That is the first fruit; crying out for mercy.

2. Our regard for His word

The second one is one is our regard for the word of God. This, for us, is the beginning of wisdom.

3. Dealing with our uncleanness

A third fruit is that when the Lord addresses a matter it is that we are dealing with uncleanness.

2Co 6:17-18. 'Therefore, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty".'

Then he continued straight on, and this is where the chapter distinction is quite unhelpful.

1Co 7:1. 'Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness in the fear of the God.*'

It is dealing with uncleanness, but it is also perfecting holiness, or we are committed to our sanctification as sons of God.

And this is where all the expectations of who God is and what He should do for us, and so on, completely dissipate as we meet Christ eye to eye and cry out for mercy. This becomes the foundation of our life as those who are poor, or bankrupt, in spirit.

We are not benefactors to God, nor are we benefactors to anybody else. We are poor in spirit, crying out for mercy. And then we are those who tremble at His words; so we have regard for His words. 'Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another.' Mal 3:16. And so we are engaging the fellowship of the word.

Then, when the Lord addresses a matter, we are dealing with uncleanness, because the only reason He is addressing us is because there is grace to deal with it.

Whenever He is identifying something, He is also offering to us a provision in His offering, which is

His mercy to see the thing dealt with – cut off, finished!

So, we are laying hold of that. And if the Lord is talking to us about laziness, then we cease being lazy on the point that He has identified. We are, equally, being diligent on the other side of the coin. It is a commitment to our sanctification as a son of God.

Protection for the God-fearer –under the shadow of His wings

On that premise, if we are God-fearers, then He is our protection, and is becoming our protection.

Pro 14:26. 'In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence and His children will have a place of refuge.'

We know that this is under the shadow of His wings.

Psa 91:1-4. 'He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 'I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust" Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.'

We can connect this definitively to the opening of the fourth seal.

'He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler [meaning a small shield].'

THREE DIMENSIONS OF HIS PROTECTION

The three dimensions to this as we close today.

1. Protected from oppression of unclean spirits

If we are dealing with uncleanness, then we will be protected from the oppression of unclean spirits.

We have talked a lot about that and so I will just leave that one, but that is a big part of the protection that the Lord wants you to know in your life.

It is protection from unclean spirits and, obviously, the key to that is dealing with our own uncleanness, because that is what gives access or advantage to the unclean spirit.

2. Protected from His judgements on the world

Secondly, we are protected from the judgement of God which is coming upon the whole world.

The Lord is not presently judging the world. The world has been confined to the principle of time and chance; but He does intervene, here and there, in a very limited way in terms of sovereign judgement.

But the focus of His judgement, at the moment, is actually in the house of God. This is where judgement begins. He is not yet judging the world.

He has judged the world in Christ but it is not yet manifest in the world. That will not happen until the Father takes His seat, and when He does take His seat, He does so to judge the world.

At the same time, He will spread His tabernacle over all those who belong to Mt Zion, every citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, so that we are protected under the shadow of His wings. We will be protected from His judgement being poured out upon the world. This is a very significant point of focus for us.

However, this is all dependent upon us embracing, now, the process of cleansing, so that we are being cleansed and sanctified from the world.

Isa 4:3. 'It shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy – everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion [and this is why He is speaking to the seven lampstand churches through the whole of the church age] and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgement and by the spirit of burning.'

This is by Him confronting us, personally, eye to eye and heart to heart, with eyes like a flame of fire. This is how you interface with the spirit of judgement and the spirit of burning.

So, on this basis:

Vs5-6. 'Then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion...'

I just love this, because this is talking about your house, this is talking about your family – 'every dwelling place that belongs to Mount Zion', every resident, every citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem.

'He will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies...'

I read that as every congregation that belongs to the heavenly Jerusalem. We know that. in our present day, the elect are scattered to the four

winds of the earth and there will be sons of God, everywhere, who are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

So, 'He will spread His tabernacle over every dwelling place ... and above her assemblies [every congregation that belongs to the bride city], a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.'

The nature of our protection –our participation in His offering and sufferings

There are many other verses we could comment on concerning this, but I will just comment very briefly on the nature of our protection.

In our present day, and this has always been the case and will always been the case, our protection is our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Our protection is not that we will have no suffering. Our protection is that we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's suffering so that we are receiving *His* resurrection life.

This is why you cannot die one minute before your time, because you are joined to Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings and you are receiving His resurrection life, which is sustaining you through the course of your life, and you are finding grace to do everything that He has asked you to do as a son of God.

So, that is your protection; regardless of what happens to you, you are receiving that grace, resurrection life.

We still experience what the world experiences, however the outcome is very different for us because we are joined to Christ and are receiving the grace of His resurrection life.

We could look at a myriad of examples of that. You will be able to reflect on that in your own life in terms of receiving the fruit of resurrection life.

Of course, the best example of all is the two thieves; two people experiencing exactly the same circumstances – for one it was the manifestation of eternal judgement and torment. The other was still crucified, still pinned to the cross, but he was actually beginning to receive, as a God-fearer, the

grace of resurrection of life – and so he was going to be with Christ, in glory.

**After the Father takes His seat
–‘hurt not the wine and the oil’
–a sanctifying line of distinction**

However, the protection that the church will experience when the Father takes His seat will go further than this, because He will begin to make a distinction between the inhabitants of Mt Zion and the rest of the world.

You see this in Egypt, where once you get to the third plague, the magicians were no longer able to replicate the plagues. The magicians in Egypt, by their enchantments and sorcery, could replicate turning water into blood and were able to bring up frogs; but they were not able to replicate turning the dust into lice. Hence, they confessed, ‘This is the finger of God’.

The Lord made a distinction from the fourth plague onwards, I think, between the land of Goshen, which is a type of the land of the living that is still in the middle of the world, Egypt, and the rest of Egypt. And of course, that distinction ran all the way through to the blood on the doorpost and lintel. That is, of course, a major theme as well.

In the same way, at the end of the age, or in the time of the end, there will be a big distinction between those who belong to Mt Zion and those who belong to the world. And there will be a massive, massive harvest coming out of the world during this time.

When you are looking at the opening of the seals when the Lord takes peace from the earth (because He is restraining it at the moment), we will have world war, and then the opening of the third seal in terms of the scarcity of resources, famine, everything that is happening now and, as we have said many times, these are just birth pangs. They are little foretastes, or harbingers, of what the seals will look like, in terms of pestilence and war and famine or scarcity of resources and inflation. All of these things are just birth pains of what is to come.

But under the seals, the Lord will be making a very big distinction between the world and those who belong to Mt Zion.

And so when you have the rider of the black horse, under the opening of the third seal, and the statement is made from the middle of the four

living creatures, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius’, which basically means that what a person earns in terms of their daily wage will not be sufficient for their daily needs – at the same time you have the Lord saying, ‘Hurt not the wine or the oil’.

This is because there will be a sanctifying line of distinction there. There will be an economy working in the fellowship of the body of Christ in a completely different way from the economy in the world.

Then under the fourth seal when that pale and sickly green horse is given power over one quarter of the earth, to kill by sword, by famine, and by pestilence – all of the judgements of seals two, three and four – everyone who dies under those judgements drops straight down into hell.

That is *not* how any son of God will be dying. It is a massive point of distinction there in terms of ‘under the shadow of His wings’.

There will still be a persecution of the church running through this phase but that is a completely different thing.

3. Protected by His fear poured upon the ungodly

There is a lot of Scripture around all of this, but there is a final important element (and this may not be something that you have necessarily thought of) of God’s protection for the God-fearer.

It is that He will actually pour out His fear upon the inhabitants of the world so that they do not touch the people of God, in any way, beyond what the Lord Himself will sovereignly allow for the sake of His people – whether that is for the sake of circumcising the other law from our heart (which we all need) or whether it is for the sake of the evangelistic ministry of the church. And we know that the church will be hated of all nations in the days ahead. But it is completely limited.

I am sure there will be many very interesting testimonies of people in different situations, which will not be able to be explained in any other way, apart from the fact that person is a God-fearer and, because they are a God-fearer, the Lord pours out fear upon the inhabitants of the world so that they just do not touch them in the way you would ordinarily expect.

It is very, very interesting and there are lot of examples of that in the Scriptures.

The psalmist said concerning the nation of Israel that 'Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them had fallen upon them.' Psa 105:38.

Fear had fallen upon Egypt and so they were glad when the nation of Israel went out! Moses said:

Exo 15:16. 'Fear and dread will fall on them. By the greatness of Your arm they will be *as still as stone*.'

An interesting description of those in the world who may seek a son of God's destruction: 'As still as stone'. Just completely immobilised, but for no clearly definable reason except that they are immobilised by the fear of God – but not as a God-fearer!

'They will be as still as stone, till Your people pass over ... till the people pass over whom You have purchased.'

Exo 23:27. "I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.'

Deu 11:25 (before they went into the promised land) 'No man shall be able to stand against you. The Lord your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.'

And there are many other Scriptures we could read. But that is a very interesting element to the protection that belongs to a God-fearer.

I think that we can continue to press ahead with a great sense of security and confidence, knowing that the Lord is protecting us. But at the same time, soberly registering that we do need to be those who fear God, because of course His protection is predicated upon us being God-fearers.