

The Beginning of Knowledge

Proverbs 1:7

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” - Proverbs 1:7

1. Introduction

- This verse is one of **the more famous and well-known** verses in the Book of Proverbs.
 - There are **several purposes** that Solomon has for the book **outlined in the chapter as a whole**.
 - But **verses 1-7** tells what is surely **the more central** and significant purpose, not to mention **that it is perhaps the most important** to you and I and **enables believers to gain** the knowledge that is **badly needed to live in a godly fashion** as they **walk through the world**.
 - **One writer** described this purpose as: **“To promote wisdom and godly living”**.
 - Also, we might **acknowledge** our verse here as **a theme of the entire book**.
 - **What it puts forth** as this **ventral purpose** can be described in two sections:

A. First, God desires for us

- First, God desires for us **to have a working, functional understanding of what true wisdom is and where** it comes from.
 - Solomon **takes great pains throughout the Book** to tell us **what this knowledge and wisdom is**
 - **and how we should view life,**
 - **in all of** it parts and degrees
 - **in order to be successful** in all areas that God leads us into.

B. We Also Need to Note:

- We **might also note** that the Book,
 - **at least the beginning** of it,

- speaks of the **“fear of the Lord”** as the **foundation or beginning** of this knowledge.
 - The phrase **“fear of the Lord”** appears **27 times** in the Bible,
 - **26 of those** times being in the OT and
 - **only one** of them, **interestingly, in the NT** ().
 - **13 times** here **in the Book** of Proverbs.

C. Basic Interpretation

- These words **form a motto**, as it were, **shadowing forth the teaching of this Book**.
 - For by **“the fear of the Lord”** (so often referred to) is **meant true religion**.
 - It **comprehends all** the principles of **godliness**.
 - It is **the basis, or root**, of knowledge.
 - There is **no true knowledge without it**.
 - But **fools**, the (spiritually) **hardened and stupid**,
 - **despise the wisdom** and **“discipline”**
 - which **come through fear** of the Lord,
 - and **so long as this is their habit** (the **rejection of lack or the Fear of the Lord**),
 - fools they **must remain**.

D. An Essential Prelude

- Reverence toward God and the fear of the Lord is the **essential prelude** to all wisdom and successful living.
 - The Bible, **quite understandably**, has a great deal to say **about this matter**,
 - we can call it **“Godly Fear”** for our purposes here.

1. God is the object and author of “Godly Fear”.

*Is 8:13 The LORD of hosts,
Him you shall hallow;
Let Him be your fear,
And let Him be your dread.*

- **Remember that the Name for the Lord** - “Lord of Hosts”
 - is **essentially a Military term** -

- it tells Israel to **remember that**
 - God is a God Who can **fight for them,**
 - **defending them** and
 - **protecting them** from
- **ANY attack.**
- It is this God who **Isaiah** tells his readers to **treat as ‘hallow’** or to **treat as holy.**
 - Their God is **different than any of the gods of the surrounding nations!**

Jer 32:39–40 then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.

- **We might think** of a couple different reasons for **knowing this is so.**
 - **First, God is God** and we are not.
 - He exists in an entirely different level or realm than we are.
 - I’m **not talking about a scientific** kind of idea here,
 - but just that **as the “holy” One,**
 - we know that **God is utterly “different”** than **any part or member of His creation.**
 - **“Different” or “separate” is actually the primary or basic meaning of the word “holy”** in the Bible.
 - Man, as a **creation of God,** and as a **sinful and rebellious** one at that.
 - He is, **by nature, about as far in the opposite direction** as can possibly be thought of.
 - **The only way that man can come, at least to some degree, in a godly direction is to, as **Solomon indicates here,****

- adopt the “fear of the Lord” which is, as Solomon says, the beginning of knowledge.
- That lead us to our second idea...

2. “Godly Fear” is clearly put forth and understood through Scripture.

- In fact, the Bible is the **ONLY** place where men can understand and gather the fear of the Lord.
 - **Spiritual wisdom is not a matter of any human device or thinking.**
 - We do not and, in fact, cannot understand the **fear of the Lord,**
 - **or Godly Wisdom** for that matter,
 - **by any human device, save, perhaps,**
 - **by our ability to read!**
- Our **only available device**, is by means of **prayer and the earnest seeking of it via the Bible**.
- **Men don’t like this** to be true, but **it is none-the-less.**
- **Solomon tells us so in number of place here** in Proverbs,
- **The place we have under consideration here is the first and best known** of these places
 - **He mentions it again:**

Prov 2:3–5 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.

3. This “fear” is not something that men know instinctively.

- It is **true, according to Romans 1 & 2**, that
 - **all men know that there is a God and**
 - **that they are accountable to Him.**
- But it seems that this “built in” knowledge is very **different knowing the “fear of the Lord”**.

- It is **described in a number of fashions throughout the Scripture:**

2. *It Is Described as:*

A. **The beginning of knowledge.**

- Solomon gives us **one of the most valuable and well known clues** as to **just what** the “Fear of the Lord” is exactly.

Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

- Knowledge **has to begin somewhere.**
 - Solomon **makes it quite clear**, again and again, that it **arises as a function of seeking the wisdom of God via His Word.**
 - He seems to tell us **that fearing the Lord is the first step** in acquiring knowledge and/or wisdom:

Prov 9:10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Prov 15:33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.

- One point I’d like to make clear is that “fearing the Lord” is **not the SUM of the Knowledge** of the Lord!!
- There is **MORE to the knowledge of the Lord than fearing Him**
- We may take a look at what the Bible says about **“Knowing” the Lord at a later time - this is another topic that Solomon addresses** in some depth here in Proverbs.
- For now, let’s just get in our minds that the “fear” of the Lord is **the start of growing and getting a real grip and practical implementation** of the knowledge of God.
- **Another way that Solomon described the presence of the “Fear of the Lord” is a...**

B. Hatred of evil.

Prov 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

- **“Hate” here**, interestingly, speaks of **the idea of scorn or perhaps a decrease** in status - something that **has a decrease in status or priority** in our view.
 - The word for **“evil” here goes right along with that idea** - it **speaks of that which one knows to be of small worth.**
 - The **combination of the two speaks** of just what happens **at times in our lives.**
 - We **KNOW that some of the things that we indulge in are of little worth**, and **perhaps are contemptible**, even **damaging to our Christian lives.**
 - Solomon **here tells us that it is a function of the fear of the Lord** that we, **in light of what we know to be worthless to our service to the service of the Lord**, **set it aside as we know it is useless and offensive to God.**
 - The fear of the Lord is **that which causes us to forsake** that which **causes us to seek** to pure and clean before God, walking **purely before him as we cast aside what offends God.**
- Again, **another way the Fear of the Lord is described is as...**

C. Wisdom.

Job 28:28 And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.’ ”

- **Job’s closing words of self-vindication.**
 - He **clung to his righteousness**, 27:1–6,
 - **contrasting himself with wicked people**, 7–23.
 - He **described the treasures of earth**, 28:1–6,
 - and **the higher wealth of wisdom**, 7–22,
 - which is **known by God**, 23–28.
- Job **outlines his past blessings and honors**, 29:1–10,

- and **the good deeds** he had wrought, 11–25,
- **contrasting his present shameful humiliation**, 30:1–19,
 - **with God’s silence**, 20–31.
- He will end confidently maintaining his **chastity and righteousness**, 31:1–12;
 - his **philanthropy**, 13–23; and
 - his **integrity and hospitality**, 24–34.
 - He **challenged God and man to disprove** his claim, 35–40.
 - He will **conclude by saying in a word**: ‘I am clean!’
 - The **next time he spoke, he declared** in essence,
 - **‘Behold I am vile’** (42:6).
 - The **reason for the change is recorded in the earlier part of the book**.
- Job **had made the connection** that the others would not.
 - **While the specific** features of God’s wisdom **may not be revealed** to us,
 - **the alpha and omega of wisdom is to revere God and avoid sin** (cf. Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Eccl. 12:13, 14),

¹⁰ *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do His
commandments.
His praise endures forever. (Psalm 111:10)*

⁷ *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)*

¹⁰ *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
(Proverbs 9:10)*

¹³ *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man's all.*

¹⁴ *For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14)*

- It is **clear that Solomon** didn't just either **come up with or make** this stuff up **himself!**
-

Job 28:28 And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.' ”

- The essence of what he is saying here is that being what God want you to be and realizing His blessing and protection in life simply means that we take heed of what God has made plain to His creation...
 - Hearing His “speaking”
 - Taking it in even if it is different that might be expected
 -
 - The use of the word “Behold” suggests an interjection of the following idea...
 - We must grasp the “fear of the Lord” so that we might progress to and grasp the wisdom we need to accomplish what God wishes.
- We must seek Him for knowledge and also leave the unanswered questions to Him in trusting submission.
 - All we can do is trust and obey (cf. Eccl. 12:13)
 - and that is enough wisdom (this is the wisdom of Prov. 1:7–2:9).
 - One may never know the reasons for life's sufferings.
- David ties this “fear of the Lord” and the resulting Wisdom to the matters of understanding and obedience to God's Word:

*Ps 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do His
commandments. His praise endures forever.*

- It is, indeed a marvelous idea that our “understanding” is a function, not ONLY of the “fear of the Lord” as we have seen, but also of the “doing” of God’s commandments.
 - Psalm 111 speaks of The King-Priest on his throne (cf. Ps 110 where David spoke of the coming Messiah).
 - First of the hallelujah (‘Praise the Lord’) psalms.
 - His work of redemption is praised (Lk 1:68).
- “Beginning” speaks of the starting part...the part that comes before all of the rest...
 - We note here that it is joined to both “the fear of the Lord” and “wisdom”
 - Think of it as the Pennsylvania turnpike.
 - In order to ride on the PA Turnpike and get any where, there are some things that can be thought of as the “beginning”
 - You can’t get to you destination otherwise.
 - Ready at home
 - Get the car
 - Strat ’er up, gear, etc.
 - Go to the Entrance and got through the terminal
 - THEN, and only THEN can you ride on the Turnpike
 - All that given, you can arrive at the exit and then go you destination.
 - But the other matters where then Beginning of the Trip.
- Likewise, in similar fashion, “The fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of wisdom.
 - The ONLY way to wisdom, Biblical, godly Wisdom, is via the “Fear of the Lord”.
- Again, we note that this is also joined with the other two ideas:
 - Once the fear of the Lord develops, or begins to develop wisdom, more comes the believer’s way:
 - The desire and ability to seek A good understanding
 - Likewise, those with the Fear of the Lord and possess Wisdom have the desire to do His commandments.
 - We might also add the capacity and desire to offer a praise to God that endures forever.

- We should also note that the Fear of the Lord ought to be...

D. A treasure to saints.

- This is another famous verse here in Proverbs, in Ch. 15:

Prov 15:16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.

- “Better” speaks of ones’ mental and emotional experience.
 - It is not a mental or production matter
 - It does imply that whatever is being spoken of yields a pleasant or positive experience as compared to one’s prior experience
 - The comparison is “little” vs. a lot or more.
 - What makes it better is our topic - “the fear of the Lord”.
 - Most people would have the mindset that the “more” would be better, but once we are in possession of the “Fear of the Lord”, the understanding/knowledge that results from it (as we have seen)
 - The one who knows the Lord and has come to possess the “Fear of the Lord” colors our idea of what is valuable or good.
 - Again the comparison (something that Solomon is very, very good at!!) is between a “little” and “great treasure”
 - Note that this is no token treasure!!
 - Little speaks of a trifle or tiny amount
 - “great treasure” is a combo of two words - Treasure is what we perceive it to be - valuable stuff
 - “Great” speaks of a gigantic measure of what it is joined with!!
 - The meaning is clear!!
 - Even is life is modest in what it gives to the believer - if the “fear of the Lord” is present in their lives - life will still be BETTER that if they had a great deal!!
 - Again, this is NOT just a matter of mentally think a good way!!

- It is the effect of the Fear of the Lord that brings to be this proper and godly perception.
- Next, once again, related to what we have already said, the Bible makes clear that there is a fullness in the character and perception that the “fear of the Lord” produces...
 - Wisdom
 - Knowledge
 - Stability in the midst of unstable times
 - The realization of the strength that salvation can bring to life
 - BECAUSE of all of this...it is little WONDER that the believer comes view and think of the very possession/exercise of it as a “treasure”!!
 - The word refers to where one keeps supplies, their storeroom, a safe place for what is considered to be valuable.
 - BTW - note the term “His treasure” and we’ll simply note that it is singular!!
 - Isaiah deliberately directs the group that was his listeners to think in singular terms, in personal terms!

Is 33:6 Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure.

- It is the personal, individual apprehension of the “fear of the Lord” that brings God’s blessing and usage - NOT any group or conglomerate practice of what is perceived as a good or godly thing that God rewards.
- This is NOT what many, in today’s “church” think of and treat as what makes one godly.
- Isaiah disagreed!
- In similar fashion, speaking of the place that the godly person holds the “fear of the Lord”...described as:

E.A fountain of life.

Prov 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death.

- Solomon is excellent in Proverbs in teaching concerning the things that are in contrast in our lives as we strive to live for the Lord.
- Likewise, he is very, very good in telling us what the results of obedience and drawing close to our Lord and Master are and why it is what he says it is...
 - When we seek out and learn to exercise life in the “fear of the Lord” it isn’t just a thing that we have...or what we think...
 - It is that which begins to act as source of nourishment, raising us up and causing us to grow more and more in Christ...
 - It is a source, that which “bubbles forth” and gives what is necessary with an abundant sense.
 - It can be understood as speaking of the manner in which it comes forth also...bubbling, streaming forth in abundance more than sufficient for the need of the one who “fears the Lord”.
- Note that Solomon also talks about why God has designed the “fear of the Lord” to function as this “stream” -
 - It is to enable the one fearing the Lord to “turn one away from the snares of death”.
 - This is NOT speaking of the matters of ultimate death that leads to judgment as an unredeemed person.
 - A “snare” is that which is used to suddenly catch an unsuspecting one; such as a bird or small animal.
 - We should note that the idea of the snare is that of something that the one caught cannot escape himself.
 - Birds, animals stray right into snares UNLESS they are aware or are warned of the snares presence.
 - That warning is what Solomon is saying that they “fear of the Lord” does in the life of the believer!!

- It acts as that which nourishes and builds up the believer to enable them to see the snares of sin coming and so, not get snared!!
- Again - “death” here speaks of the effect of sin and the degenerative effects that sin and sinful indulgence can have in a life...
- The “fear of the Lord” redirects our attention and thinking, our “wanting”, over time, to avoiding the
- Also, The Fear of the Lord is described as...

F. Sanctifying.

- Every now and again we see an indication that David, despite his failings (Solomon had failings as well) we see that he was very much concerned with the matter of Sanctification.
 - It seems evident that it was in the overcoming of these failings that David learned much about the godliness and walking with the Lord, not to mention the experience of the Nature, grace and mercy of God of which we read so wonderfully in the Book of Psalms.
 - It seems evident that Solomon had much the same experience - in his repentance and return from his sinful experience - he grew in his knowledge of the Lord and how to live a life that pleased Him
 - Thus, God led him to write that down (as David did) for successive generations to grow from.
 - David tells us...
- It is interesting that, at times and like others defines what the “fear of the Lord is and how it shows itself in a believers’ life...

*Ps 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous
altogether.*

- Psalm 19:7-9 actually gives us A sixfold description of God’s special revelation.

⁷ *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;*

⁸ *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the
eyes;*

⁹ *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous
altogether.*

1. **law.** I.e., His revealed will. (v7)
 2. **testimony.** His truth. (7b)
 3. **precepts or statutes.** I.e., particular injunctions. (8a)
 4. **commandment.** Authoritative words. (8b)
 5. **fear.** I.e., reverential trust that God's words foster in His people. (9a)
 6. **judgments.** I.e., decisions relating to human situations. (9b)
- Notice also that that he goes on in verse 10 and speaks of the great value that what comes from the fear of the Lord can have:

¹⁰ *More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (Psalm
19:10)*

- They are extremely valuable - very desirable - than that huge amount of Gold we spoke about earlier...
- David here adds the idea that, when coupled with the fear of the Lord - all of the 6 things we just spoke of "taste" sweetly to the believer!!
- There is another way the "fear of the Lord" is described as similar, in type, to the fear that a child has for his/her natural father.
- It is

G. Filial and reverential.

Heb 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much

more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

- Of course, we all have human fathers...
 - We didn't just "pop" into existence
 - Neither is this so in the spiritual realm!
- Note we begin with the word "furthermore"
 - It is tied to what was said just before
 - The writer was talking about the chastening of God and how we ought to see to it that we are receiving it rightly and submitting to it with virtually a glad heart.
- In verse 7 he introduced the family metaphor.
 - The only ones God does not chasten are those who are not truly His sons (daughters). [v8]
- Likewise, we ought to remember that God is our Father and chastens us as children in order to prepare us for the coming Kingdom.
 - This is another matter that believers to with godly fear (not to mention 'reverence')
 - Look over at Hebrews 12:28:

***Heb 12:28** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*

- Note the multiple things said:
 - It is a function of those who are receiving the Kingdom
 - What is true, is true forever and cannot even be shaken
 - This is the writers' specific intent - the word means enduring, shaken, movable
 - There is a negative applied so the word is turned about!
 - It cannot be moved or shaken, it cannot be caused to "not endure"
 - The writer tells us that, in light of this truth - we need to "have grace", that is to bear up even when things don't go our way!!
 - It is by grace, then, that we may "serve God acceptably"

- We will be able to serve Him as our Father
- We will be able to serve God in the fashion that demonstrates “godly fear”.
- Just to move a bit further...having the “fear of the Lord” is not just something that we “ought” to do; or that would be “good” for us to take on!
 - Nor is it something that comes as a “built in” to everyone from the moment they come to Christ.
 - It is not, a “standard” possession so to speak.
 - It MUST be sought and apprehended, adopted, if you will!!
 - Nor is something that we can “shop” for in the “Christian qualities” catalogue...
 - It is COMMANDED for believers!!

3. The “Fear of the Lord” is Commanded.

Deut 13:4 You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

- Not the language here is this portion of the Law:
 - “You Shall”
 - Walk after the Lord
 - Fear Him
 - Keep His commandments
 - obey His voice
 - serve Him and hold fast to Him
 - “Fearing the Lord” and “walking after Him” are joined together - same phrase
 - same phrase
- So are the next 4 things - in two phrases
 - Keep and obey
 - Serve Him and Hold fast to Him
- All three are joined into the same general thoughts
- This same command (generally) is elsewhere...

- David mentioned also tells us of this particular Command of God...

Ps 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

Ps 22:23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

- Solomon also says it again in the Book of Ecclesiastes:

Eccl 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

- We even see it in the NT in 1 Peter:

1 Pet 2:17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

- Peter places the command in a list of 4 that we need to be thinking over as we seek to serve the Lord:
 - Honor ALL people
 - Love our Brothers in Christ (especially)
 - Fear God
 - Honor the King - our Political Leaders
- Of course - Scripture gives us a number of examples of those who did just what we are talking about:

4. It Was Exemplified by

A. Abraham.

- We're all familiar with the account in Genesis of **Abraham obeying God's command to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice:**

Gen 22:12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

- We mentioned what God puts forth here already
 - It shows **obedience**
 - It seeks to **honor God**
 - It does so even **at great cost!!**
- **Joseph is another** wonderful example:

B. Joseph.

Gen 39:9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

- Remember that **Joseph was**, in Egypt, **left with everything** that belonged to **Pharaoh**
 - It is **interesting that verse 6b specifically says** that Joseph was a **good-looking fellow**.
 - We remember that **Pharaoh's wife decided** that she **wanted a little tryst** with Joseph, **in the face of her bond** to her husband, the **most powerful man** in Egypt
 - She knew what **Joseph's penalty** would be (not to mention hers') **if Pharaoh found out**
- But it is **clear WHY** Joseph refused and **would not give in...**

... How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (39:9b)

- He was **more concerned** with his **responsibility** and his **obedience** to God -
- It **kept him from sin!!**
- Another interesting example from Josephs' life is that his fear of the Lord was a part of what caused him to behave righteously when his brothers came:

Gen 42:18 Then Joseph said to them the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God:"

- Remember we said that a part of the fear of the Lord is that which mirrors the relationship of family and that we, in particular, are to honor our spiritual family.
- He says that his **treatment** of his brethren was **prompted by** his “fear of the Lord”!!
- **Another example** is the one of:

C. Obadiah.

- Look at:

1 Kin 18:12 And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth.

- This chapter is record of Elijah’s message to King Ahab announcing coming rain
 - We’re told that **Ahab had an Obadiah** who was **in charge of his household**
 - Verse 3b says that **Obadiah “feared the Lord greatly (as opposed to Ahab)!!**
 - You’ll also remember that this **Ahab was one who**, while **Jezebel was massacring** the prophets that were in Israel - **hid those prophets** to save their lives.
 - The **servant had been asked** to tell Ahab Elijah was present to speak with him (vv. 7, 18), **but he was afraid because Ahab was seeking Elijah** so intensely.
 - Since **Elijah had disappeared** from sight earlier (17:5), Obadiah was afraid that the **Holy Spirit would carry Elijah away again** (cf. 2 Kin. 2:16) and the **irrational Ahab would kill him** for the false report of Elijah’s presence.
 - These **several verses** seem to **indicate that Obadiah would do what the Lord told him to do** - he would be **obedient!!**
- Another example is

D. Nehemiah.

- It seems certain that Nehemiah is exhibiting generosity here...
 - The “40 shekels” mentioned here was **approximately one lb. of silver.**
 - The **text seems to point out** that the “governors” had laid **usurious burdens** on the people

Neh 5:15 But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God.

- It seems that this was an offense to Nehemiah and we’re told that it was “**because of the fear of God.**”
 - Nehemiah would not exact usury from his fellow countrymen as his predecessors had, because he **viewed it as an act of disobedience toward God**, and it was the **fear of the Lord that had preference in his life** in this matter.
- There is also the **example of...**

E. Job.

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

- As a part of the initial definition of who it is that the rest of the Book will deal with, we are told that the Lord spoke of Job, in part, as *one who fears God and shuns evil?*
 - I think that Job will be **one of the great saints to meet** when we go to be with the Lord!!
 - Notice the **combo of things linked together** here:
 - **Blameless** - complete, well-behaved, guiltless, without sin, honestly what he appears or proclaims himself to be
 - **Upright** - related to above, meaning: straight, level, smooth
 - **Feared God** - spiritual reverence for God

- Shunned Evil - active holiness, turning aside, changing a direction, desisting, consciously turning away from
- Just a **few verses** later we read:

Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?”

- It is astonishing that God would be able to speak of a man as such.
 - **And to the chief accuser** of all men - Satan
 - Note that he **uses some of the same words as in verse 1** (not surprising)
- And, interestingly, the NT points to another example...

F. Christians.

- The Scripture draws a distinction between worldly people at the time of the beginning of God’s Church:
 - Look at **Acts 9:31**
 - **Chapter 9** gives the account of the **conversion of “Saul”** - Paul (1-9)
 - His **baptism by Ananias** (10-19)
 - His **initial preaching** of the Lord Jesus and **work in evangelism** (20-22)
 - His **escape from Death** at the hands of the Jews (23-25)
 - It tells us that he **went to Jerusalem** (26-30)
 - Then - verse 31 speaks of **the prosperity that began to be seen...**

Acts 9:31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

- The believers that came to Christ and began to flood the area of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had four characteristics that were a part of their lives:
 - We’re told that they **had peace**

- and were **edified**.
- They were **known to be walking in the fear of the Lord**
- and **also in the comfort** of the Holy Spirit
- Most of that would fall in the “auto-response arena BUT
 - **Walking in the “Fear of the Lord”**
 - is something we’ve **already talked about** -
 - it is something that is **gotten deliberately and purposefully!!**
- and that puts these believers into the “example” group
- Another NT example is that of...

G. Cornelius.

- In Acts 10:1-2 we read of someone who I suspect is familiar to all of us...
- It is the account of Cornelius sending a delegation to Joppa

***10** There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ² a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. (Acts 10:1–2)*

- Like others we’ve talked about, he was “devout” - meaning one who is “pious, godly, showing reverence for God”.
 - He was **one who recognized** God’s holy nature and being and **saw to it that he attributed proper honor and respect to it.**
- Luke specifically ties (w/ “and”) this to the idea of his being “one who feared God”
- **One last example** we can think about is the legendary Noah...

H. Noah.

***Heb 11:7** By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, , prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*

- We've all heard the reference to Noah **recorded in Hebrews 11:7**
 - Noah, **as with a number of OT saints - exercised faith** when he heard from God
 - **What he heard was both "different"** and distressing, even alarming
 - **He had not seen anything hinting** of it yet... **all he had** was **what God had said** to him...
- What was it that "moved" him to obey and be used of God for one of the great spiritual act in human history?
 - **He was "moved with godly fear"**
 - This wasn't fear of what might be coming...
 - It was a **sense of dread and the horror of the fate** of those around him
 - His **fear was fear of God**, as we have already spoken of...
 - He **loved, honored, recognized God's** holy and Righteous nature
 - He **saw God's Justice** and what it **was about Him that demanded the exercise of Judgment...**
 - It was THIS that **moved him** to "...**prepare an ark for the saving of his household**"
 - If we **look carefully**, I am virtually **certain** that we **could find a LOT of men and women who feared** the Lord and
 - who **demonstrated that fear in a way or ways that glorified** the Lord and **served** His purposes.
- We should also talk about what we have as ...

5. Motives to See to it That the Fear of the Lord Has a Prominent Place in our Lives

A. The holiness of God.

Rev 15:4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come

and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.”

B. The greatness of God.

Deut 10:12 “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Deut 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.

C. The goodness of God.

1 Sam 12:24 Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

D. The forgiveness of God.

Ps 130:4 But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.

E. Wondrous works of God.

Josh 4:23–24 for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, 24 that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.”

F. Judgments of God.

Rev 14:7 saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

6. A characteristic of believers.

Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.

7. Necessary to

A. The worship of God.

Ps 5:7 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

Ps 89:7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all those around Him.

B. The service of God.

Ps 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

Heb 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

C. Avoiding of sin.

Ex 20:20 And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.”

D. Righteous government.

2 Sam 23:3 The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: ‘He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God.’

E. Impartial administration of justice.

2 Chr 19:6–9 and said to the judges, “Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment. 7 Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.” 8 Moreover in Jerusalem, for the judgment of the LORD and for controversies, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests, and some of the chief fathers of Israel, when they returned to Jerusalem. 9 And he commanded them, saying, “Thus you shall act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with a loyal heart:

F. Perfecting holiness.

2 Cor 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 God.

8. Those who have it

A. Give pleasure to God.

Ps 147:11 The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
In those who hope in His mercy.

B. Are pitied by God.

Ps 103:13 As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities
those who fear Him.

C. Are accepted by God.

Acts 10:35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and
works righteousness is accepted by Him.

D. Receive mercy from God.

Ps 103:11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, So
great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;

Ps 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,

Luke 1:50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation.

E. Are blessed.

Ps 112:1 Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who delights greatly in His commandments.

Ps 115:13 He will bless those who fear the LORD, Both small and great.

F. Confide in God.

Ps 115:11 You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.

Prov 14:26 In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge.

G. Depart from evil.

Prov 16:6 In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.

H. Converse together of holy things.

Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.

I. Should not fear man.

Is 8:12–13 “Do not say, ‘A conspiracy,’ Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. 13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.

Matt 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.

J. Desires of, fulfilled by God.

Ps 145:19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.

K. Days of, prolonged.

Prov 10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongs days, But the years of the wicked will be shortened.

9. Should be

A. Prayed for.

Ps 86:11 Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.

B. Exhibited in our service.

Col 3:22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

C. Exhibited in giving a reason for our hope.

1 Pet 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

D. Constantly maintained.

Deut 14:23 And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

Josh 4:24 that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.”

Prov 23:17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day;

E. Taught to others.

Ps 34:11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

10. Advantages of.

- They flow in two directions - as one of the righteous
 - AND in lack - as one of the wicked
-

Prov 15:16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.

Prov 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.

*Eccl 8:12–13 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. 13 But it will not be well with the wicked; **nor** will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, **because he does not fear before God.***

11. The wicked destitute of.

*Ps 36:1 An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is **no fear of God** before his eyes.*

Prov 1:29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD,

Jer 2:19 Your own wickedness will correct you, And your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing That you have forsaken the

*LORD your God, And the fear of Me is not in you, ” Says
the Lord GOD of hosts.*

Rom 3:18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

12. Closing Illustrations

- How wise was *Abraham*, who brought up his family

“to keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19);

- and *Isaac*, who followed on in that way!
- Good was the advice of *Jethro*, who would have only men

“such as fear God” (Exod. 18:21)

- appointed to places of authority.
- *Timothy*, brought up on those principles,
 - was in a position to keep that which was committed to his trust against

“oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Tim. 6:20).

- *Hophni* and *Phinehas* betrayed an utter absence of the fear of the Lord
 - when they made the priest’s office an occasion of scandal.
- How pitiable was their boast of knowledge,
 - those Greek philosophers to whom the cross of Christ was “foolishness”!
- How real their knowledge is to whom that cross has become

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of God, for it is the power of God unto salvation of God...” (Rom. 1:16)

13. Application

- **Let me be sure** of this, that **until I know God I know nothing.**
 - Whereas, to know Him comprehends all knowledge.

- Likewise, **in a very, very real way**, it is a **beginning** of knowing that **lays a foundation** for one to **both begin to grow in** knowledge and **from the foundation of that knowing** be **more and more able to interpret what and the meaning** of what is **going on around us!!**
- **But how** can I attain to know Him who is **so infinitely above** His creatures?
- The **Word** teaches me that “*the fear of the Lord*” is the first step **towards so high an attainment**; that **out of religious practice spiritual light comes.**
- Would I **achieve that best education for heaven**, I must begin by (with God’s help) **putting away all wilful sin**, and aiming **at holiness**.
 - Thus **the soul will be purged and prepared for the instruction** which **takes of** the things of God and **reveals them unto man**.
 - This is **the first lesson** to be learnt **in youth**, for **until this is learnt** life will be **misspent.**

Oh, let me set before me the truth, so little recognized, that “The fear of God is the whole of man,”—all his duty, all his happiness, his first lesson and his last. Without this the highest attainments are folly.

- “An **undevout astronomer** is mad.”
- “*Science without God is falsely called science.*”
- **To ignore Him is the part of fools.**
- **To despise His teaching and discipline is the height of folly.**
- We see **what it must be by putting an extreme case.**
- **Were there no fear of God, there would be no moral law, and the world would relapse into savagery, in spite of its philosophy.**

Oh then, my soul, be thou in the fear of the Lord all through this day of life; so shalt thou attain to know God!
