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Daily Devotional - Monday, April 15, 2024 - The Beginning of Wisdom

APRIL 15TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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A *Pickles* cartoon by Brian Crane shows an older gentleman named Earl hunched over a typewriter. When his wife, Opal, asks him what he's doing, he responds that he's writing a memoir and thus passing on "the wisdom that I've acquired over my long lifetime." A bit skeptical, Opal asks how long this might take. Just then, he proclaims "All done!" "Wow," she observes, "almost a whole page!"

Psalm 111:10 expresses wholehearted praise founded on the fear of the LORD. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts will have good understanding. To him belong eternal praise."

Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

PSALM 111:2

We praise God for His attributes. He's glorious, majestic, and eternal, as well as righteous, gracious, and compassionate (vv. 3–4). He's also faithful, just, trustworthy, and upright (vv. 7–8). He is further to be praised for His deeds, especially in Israel's history. He powerfully freed them from slavery and brought them to a new land. He miraculously provided food (manna) along the way. He remembers His covenant, even when His people forget and disrespect it (vv. 5–6). The bottom line: "Holy and awesome is his name" (v. 9).

How should we respond? We should praise and worship our God! These truths should delight us and inspire awe-filled gratitude. We should continually ponder them and marvel at God's greatness (v. 2). This is how we learn the fear of the Lord, grow in godly wisdom, and can

begin to seek His glory as our life's purpose.

The word "beginning" in verse 10 means "start" or "precondition," and it indicates that tenacious commitment and faith will be required to move forward. One translation renders this word "foundation," also indicating the first step in a lifelong process.

Go Deeper

Where are you in your journey to wisdom? One way to find out is to make a list of God's attributes that you especially praise Him for and of things He's done for you that you're especially thankful for.

Pray with Us: How do we grow in wisdom? Praise and worship our God, says Psalm 111. Lord Jesus, give us every day the desire to pray, to ponder Your truths, to study Your Word, to marvel at Your greatness, and to seek Your glory. Increase our faith!

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Daily Devotional - Friday, April 12, 2024 - Fear

and Righteousness

APRIL 12TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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To be “righteous” means to be morally upright, to be without sin. Of course, holy perfection is an unreachable goal. Romans 3:10 tells us: “There is no one righteous, not even one.” How then do we “pursue righteousness” (2 Tim. 2:2)?

Psalm 34:9 guides us: “Fear the LORD, you his holy people.” The Psalmist explains that righteousness does not come from us but from

Fear the LORD, you his holy people.

PSALM 34:9

Fearing the Lord is commanded for

“holy people” (v. 9). By drawing near to God in love and respect, we are able to control our tongues and in general “turn from evil and do good” (vv. 13–14).

As we pursue righteousness, the fear of the Lord is comforting and even pleasurable. Why? One reason is that we’re perfectly safe in Him as our refuge (v. 8). Drawing near to God or “tasting” His presence brings genuine pleasure and delight. In addition, “those who fear him lack nothing” (v. 9). God is our Provider. He cares for us. We can trust Him. Even lions, the kings of the jungle, might get weak from hunger, but not us. By relying on God, we “lack no good thing” (v. 10).

Verse 11 is a summons: “Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.” And what does he advise? Control your tongue, do good, and pursue peace, and the loving eyes of the LORD will be upon you (vv. 13–15). But be warned. The opposite is also true: “The face of the LORD is against those who do evil” (v. 16).

The implication is that we cannot live in this way—righteously—without the fear of the Lord. If we draw near to Him in awe and reverence, however, and depend wholly on Him, the relationship is a blessing beyond imagining!

Go Deeper

As James 3:1–12 teaches, controlling our tongue is a major challenge. How can we bring our words under God’s control, including everyday speech and social media?

Pray with Us: Too often our words are unloving and hurtful. Remind us today, Lord, that as Your people we have to control our tongue and let the Holy Spirit guide our speech. Give us a holy fear and a heart of thankfulness.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, April 11, 2024 - Fear and Purity

APRIL 11TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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According to the *Journal of Food Research*, blowing out the candles on a birthday cake multiplies the number of bacteria on the frosting by 1,400 percent! This varies by person—the “top blower” in the study increased bacteria by 120,000 percent. Although most experts don’t see these results as a serious health risk, I wouldn’t blame you for choosing cupcakes or ice cream, instead, on your next birthday.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

In the Bible, the word “pure” is not referring to being germ-free but is associated with righteousness and

goodness. In Psalm 19:9 we read, “The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.” In this case, the phrase “fear of the LORD” is used as a synonym for God’s Law or God’s Word. We know this from the context. The first half of Psalm 19 (vv. 1–6) presents the witness and praise of God by creation, while the second half (vv. 7–14) presents the witness and praise of God by the Scriptures. Specifically, in the parallelism of verse 9, the “fear of the LORD” is equated to the “decrees of the LORD,” meaning His Word. This makes sense, since the Scriptures clearly teach the fear of the Lord.

What qualities does God’s Word show? And what can it do? It’s perfect, refreshing, trustworthy, and right (v. 7). It gives wisdom, joy, light, and truth (v. 8). It’s pure, eternal, stable, and righteous (v. 9). It’s precious and delightful (v. 10). It warns us that we have choices to make and that those have consequences (v. 11). It provides an objective and infallible moral standard, helping us fight temptation and prompting repentance when we stumble (vv. 12–13). Without God’s Word, we wouldn’t even realize our errors. We can live in the fear of the Lord by thoroughly immersing our minds, hearts, and wills in the truths of Scripture.

Go Deeper

How has God’s Word shaped your life? Can you give a recent example? For individuals and churches, in what ways does inward knowledge become outward obedience? How can we pray more toward this end?

Pray with Us: Lord Jesus, our risen Savior, show us how to live in the light of Your Word. Thank You for giving us God’s Word, thank You that You are the Word who removed the separation between God and us, so that we can live in the truth of Scripture.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, April 8, 2024 - The Covenant Relationship

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Daily Devotional - Monday, April 8, 2024 - The Covenant Relationship

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In biblical times, the relationship between the idol and the worshiper seemed like a competition for control. People tried to manipulate the idol with gifts and flattery. In turn, the idol would keep people in line with perceived threats of punishment or disaster.

The covenant relationship between God and His people was much different. A central feature is God's lovingkindness and "unfailing love." His people are to love Him in return. Alongside it, as a covenant

Fear the LORD your God and serve him.

DEUTERONOMY 10:20

obligation, is to fear the Lord, acting in service and obedience (vv. 12–13).

These are fitting responses both in terms of who God is—Creator and King—and in terms of Israel’s being God’s chosen people (vv. 14–15). The Lord is not a local god or idol. He doesn’t really *need* anything from His people. They didn’t deserve Him. They hadn’t earned His favor. He freely willed to “set his affection” on them and chose them to be His own.

So they should act like it! Instead of being stubborn and “stiff-necked,” they should circumcise their hearts (v. 16). Circumcision was a mark of the covenant identity and of consecration to the Lord. It thus carried the sense of purifying or rededicating themselves.

These arguments repeat in the rest of the passage. God is mighty, awesome, and just. There’s no comparison with other “gods”—He alone is God Most High (v. 17). He’s just and generous in that He upholds the cause of those with the lowest social status, such as orphans, widows, and foreigners (v. 18). Since this is the case, being rebellious or prideful is absurd and childish. They must not take oaths in His name and then act in ways that dishonor Him. The only appropriate response is worship, fear of the Lord, and grateful obedience (vv. 19–21).

Go Deeper

To fear the Lord is the same as to put our hope in His unfailing love (Ps. 147:11). What is the meaning of hope in the Bible? How might it affect our lives in the present moment?

Pray with Us: Father, help me follow You all the days of my life in obedience, gratefulness, and service to others. Help me remember every day that You’ve already won the spiritual war, and I can live in light of Your victory, fully committed to You.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 2, 2024 - Fear and the Messiah

APRIL 02ND 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 2, 2024 - Fear and the Messiah

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In C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Susan and Lucy were preparing to meet Aslan, the Christ-figure in the *Narnia* series, for the very first time. "Is he quite safe?" Susan asked. "I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." "That you will, dearie," replied Mrs. Beaver. "And make no mistake, if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly." Mr. Beaver added, "Of course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you!"

This in a nutshell is the fear of the Lord, a fear that is also respect, and—for believers—love. Isaiah's Messianic prophecy, points out

He will delight in the fear of the LORD.

ISAIAH 11:3

Messiah will be full of the Holy Spirit, meaning “the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord” (v. 2). In fact, “he will delight in the fear of the Lord” (v. 3). Additional qualities include wisdom, understanding, power (v. 2), penetrating insight (v. 3), righteousness, justice—especially for the poor and needy, but judgment on the wicked (v. 4)—and faithfulness (v. 5).

If this sounds like God, you’ve correctly understood that the Messiah is also God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity. Part of the Messiah’s purpose and God’s plan of redemption is to inspire fear of the Lord and to bring about worship in the fear of the Lord. Typically, in Scripture, when people see a vision of God they fall flat on their faces (see days 24 and 28). This makes the Incarnation of the Messiah even more incredible! The eternal God the Son, the Word made flesh, walked around Israel like any other man. His disciples were (mostly) not overwhelmed but interacted with Him as they would with any other man.

Go Deeper

Isaiah 11:6–9 describes what will happen when the fear of the Lord fills the earth. What will that day be like and why?

Pray with Us: Father, teach us what it means to “delight in the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11:3) and show us the way of understanding, wisdom, insight, justice—the way of Israel’s Messiah, Jesus Christ. We eagerly await His Coming. Keep us ready!

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