

Formula for Fearing a Holy Lord

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[0 : 00] Do you fear the Lord? What does that look like? Is it biblical fear?

Is it the type of fear that when the chips are down and you're in a pinch, you call out to Him? Crying out to help.

Get help. Is it sort of transactional in nature? Lord, if you'll get me out of this one, I'll get to that church service. Does your fear of the Lord cause you to be nervous or cause anxiousness or confusion or chaos?

Or is it a calming fear of the Lord? Do you have moments in any of those times that you just stop in awe of who He is and what He's done?

Or do you have those moments just by opening His word and seeing the majesty of who He is? A final set of questions. When the chaos or madness of tragic events happen, are you a calming voice?

[1 : 28] Or do you raise and up the ante before something hits you and you're like, what am I doing? Today, our section, our passage, brings to light a couple of new characters.

We have sailors and we have a storm, a very, very mighty storm. We did get introduced to the storm last week in verse 4.

The Lord hurled like He threw the storm on the sea, right as Jonah said, I'm not going to obey you. And we briefly touched on the sailors, but we will get into the dialogue of these sailors, the intense dialogue, the very enlightening dialogue in light of these providential events.

And that's the second really element. We're going to look at fear today and we're going to look at providence because the storm and the sailors show us both. We see the storm shows the events of life that God is in control of, that He uses to wake us up.

And then He has His people. He has people around us. And what does that interaction look like? And fearing the Lord is clearly a narrative.

[2 : 45] We see this afraid many, many times, but it changes. The nature of it changes throughout our discourse. So we're going to unpack this. There's four main parts to the sermon.

We're going to start with just biblical definitions of both fear, what is fear of the Lord, from Scripture, what does it say? And then we're going to also define providence.

I want us to get a good definition of what providence is because I think we tend to overlook, we tend to think of God in this tight box or just only what He's doing through the Word.

And He orchestrates everything around us for a reason. We're going to then have two points on fear, a false fear and a godly fear because we see that transition in this narrative in a pagan group of people.

And finally, we're going to spend a little moment on what our testimony is, our role as people who fear the Lord or should be in these circumstances.

[3 : 49] So, some introductions, some definitions. Let's start with fear. Again, this is fear, a biblical fear. What is it? Well, we know it's important.

Solomon was the wisest man that supposedly ever lived according to the wisdom he was given by God. And he penned a few books, two of which we know very well deal with wisdom.

Proverbs 1.7 says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. And speaking of wisdom, he goes on to say in Proverbs 9.10 that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

So, it's not just what there is, knowledge of events, head knowledge, but what to do with it. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of both of those topics.

It's the foundation that he can build all of that and work in your life on. He ends Ecclesiastes, all this vanity, right?

[4 : 55] All the vanity of work and pleasure and money and fame and fortune and anything that we could want in this world. He goes through 12 chapters to say vanity.

If you go after those things, it's going to leave you high and dry. But he ends the book with this. Verse 11. The words of the wise are like goads, like nails firmly fixed on collected sayings. They are given by one shepherd. Capital S. Verse 12. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books, there is no end. In much study is a wariness of the flesh. The end of the matter, all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole duty of men. So if this is our whole duty, we should define it. Let's talk about what fear of the Lord looks like.

[5 : 57] So the definition I have is the proper awe of God caused by witnessing the Creator and or His acts and responding with or by faith in the truths about Him.

So we have an awe, but it's rooted in the truths of who He is. And there's a response. There's a faithful response that we have.

And it may be for Him that we have seen Him. There's a witness. We see that in Scripture quite a bit. We see that here. But here, we actually see more of what He does.

And that's really where we land. What are the circumstances that God brings to us that's knocking on our door to say, do you see what I'm doing? Are you paying attention?

How do we get such a definition? Well, there's a healthy fear of God's vision, of this witness of God in Isaiah 6. Isaiah was undone.

[7 : 02] He had come apart. The Word is the root that is basically the opposite of integrity or integration. It's disintegration. He is nothing because He is before the Lord.

That's an awe. There's an awe there. There's not just an awe of witnessing the Creator, but there's an awe we see in Scripture of witnessing His acts. Luke 5, another fishing story.

when Jesus appeared to the disciples after a long night of catching nothing and He says, cast it on the other side. Cast the net on the other side. And there was such a haul of fish that the nets were breaking.

Peter exclaims, depart from me. I am a sinful man. Interesting that there's a moral context to the witnessing of the acts of God. Immediately, He thinks of His own humanity in His own sinfulness. So there's a proper response also in this fear. Response of faith and truth about who the Savior is.

[8 : 09] The woman at the well taught us that fear. She had great fear. She was extremely afraid when Jesus would even talk to her, a Samaritan woman. And not only does He show her a few acts by telling her everything, He knows that she's done.

She turns and becomes perhaps the greatest evangelist in Samaria for the time. Bringing people to Christ. So, healthy fear of the Lord is moored in truth.

It's moored in who He is. It's taking the acts. It's what He has done in our lives. And then us in response, there's a faith. There's truth. There's not just, I am afraid of my God and I'm trying to run from Him.

In an amazing economy, He draws us with His fear. At first, we can't even stand in His presence and somehow, the coal touches Isaiah's lips.

Send me. Here am I. Send me. It's the nature of how God works His fear. Our second definition is providence. We've got to understand what providence is.

[9 : 19] It's not just a college. It's not just a long word that we substitute for luck because we don't believe in luck. It actually has a root. It has a meaning. It has important truth for us.

And providence is all over our passage. I've defined it as God using all of creation to work out His will. And I left you in your handouts, there are seven paragraphs in the London Baptist Confession or the 1689 Confession of Faith on divine providence.

And I gave you the bookends. I gave you one in seven. And all of those paragraphs have references, but I'm just going to read paragraph one and emphasize a couple parts.

God, the good creator of all things in His infinite power and wisdom, doth uphold direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things.

From the greatest even to the least by His most wise and holy providence to the end for the which they were created according unto His infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of His own will to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.

[10 : 47] That's a nice paragraph. There's a lot there. But I've highlighted the phrase doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things because it is the aspect that we see today.

The Lord, we know, hurled the storm. Lots are cast, but we know from Proverbs that every lot that is cast, the decision is from the Lord.

Acts 17, as Paul was calling out to the Greeks that had a monument to the unknown God on Mars Hill, verse 25 picks up his discourse by saying, speaking of God, nor is He served by any human hands as though He needed anything since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

God's not just the God of providence for a certain people. He governs it all. He continues, He says, and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

Paul is speaking about providence. Paul is speaking about this God that controls and governs all things, all boundaries, all peoples. And we know from Psalms and Isaiah and Job that the creation is at His disposal to do as He wishes, including a big fish, which we will get introduced to next week.

[12:29] Because the sailor story kind of begins and ends in our discourse, but Jonah's story is just picking up. He's got a lot more, he's got a lot more work to do. The last paragraph of providence that you see in your bulletin is this closing paragraph.

It says, As the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures, so after a more special manner it taketh care of His church and disposeth all things to the good thereof.

So while He governs and orchestrates all things to His will, the centerpiece of His will is His church for His Son. So there is a main overarching goal that He has as He moves all of creation.

So with those definitions at the ready, I want us to dive into our passage now. Let's start looking at our situation in the actors and start feeling out, okay, let's trace the elements of these, especially these sailors.

I'm going to read again verses 5-7 and pick up verse 11 because I want us to look first at false fear and I want you to catch some of these aspects.

[13:51] Then the mariners were afraid and each cried out to his God and they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had laid down and was fast asleep.

So the captain came and said to him, What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish.

Then they said to one another, Come, let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us. So they cast lots and the lot fell to Jonah.

Verse 11 says, Then they said to him, What shall we do to you that the sea may quiet down for us? For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. We're going to look at false fear.

False fear, you might say, is a fear based on emotional human reaction to a situation. It can be a severe tragedy like a sudden loss of a loved one or a disaster or just sitting in traffic.

[15:11] And we can respond with pretty emotional false human fear. I'm calling it false because it's not biblical. It's not that it didn't happen.

It's not that it's not real fear. It's not that we don't really feel what the sailors were fearing when they were on this ship being tossed. We see that fear. We see what that looks like. But let's look at what the sailors did with their false fear.

Beginning of verse 5, the first thing that we see them do is they call out to their gods. What I've titled this sub-point is a false fear has you calling out to any entity that you can possibly reach that can help you.

It's a bit of a mad scramble for grabbing something to help you. Right? So gods in this day were they were a polytheistic people.

If you were not of Jehovah God and Israelites then you believed in many gods. And the characteristic of these many gods were not just that they were you are the god of this sea and you are the god of a fish and you are the god of mammals with horns or whatever.

[16:27] There was also a nature of the gods to which that they were assigned sort of to specific geographical areas. They would believe that a god of northern Assyria would have had a certain realm that he was the god of.

It was a very you might say human-centered god because it was of their own creation. The sailors you've got to understand were professional sailors.

They did this journey from Joppa to Tarshish which was the biggest body of water that you would have been sailing in at that time. They would have known storms. They would have known what it

meant to tack into the wind and to lighten the ship when there was a storm and all those things. The first thing they do even before it says they threw the stuff in the sea is they called out to their gods. You can almost sense the whites of their eyes at seeing this storm.

This is a drastic horrible storm that they didn't think they were going to get out of. They're immediately reaching for something else outside of them. They see this storm.

[17:40] storm. It starts to break up. You can hear the cracking and the creaking of splinters if you will. They were crying out to whatever god they knew.

They were grasping. You might say they were frantic. There was a chaos to them. There would have been a chaotic scene. There would have been people throwing stuff and people coming up with whatever incantation they had for whatever god they had.

They would have probably been yelling. They would have been commanding people to do different things but also these other things to get out of it. It was a mess and yet you have Jonah who's asleep in the lowest part of the ship.

The one man that knows what's going on. Knows everything that's going on. He's asleep. So there's fear but there's probably not a high degree of confidence that the last thing I'll say about this entity that they're crying out to do you kind of wonder at what degree of confidence they had while they were doing what they were doing.

It was kind of this whatever. I mean just give me your dice. Whatever. We'll pray to whatever you've got. Do you know of any other god?

[19:03] Have you heard of any other god? If you're even remotely even you know it may not be yours but your cousin's does he have one? Who would it be? The second aspect is it's it's very self-focused.

A related aspect is that not only is it frantic but it's sort of frantic for themselves. You see this us and we and and that this may that may quiet down for us even in verse 11 into the narrative.

What do we do to you that that that we can can benefit from this? Now would we be much different? I don't know. I mean if we're in this situation there is a preservation of life aspect that naturally comes over us especially if you're with loved ones or so forth.

You're sort of you're sort of focused but there's a tenor here and I guess what I'll say is this may not be that abnormal but you see a change when we get to the end of the passage with these sailors.

They're not just thinking of themselves. A third aspect is a clear focus on physical life. Perish. That we may not perish.

[20:19] Their whole desire has to do with I need to be saved physically. That's all I care about. I need to live. Help me to live. And that's all that matters.

And fear leads you to grasp for anything. So they're desperate for any sort of stronghold in their life to keep from sinning.

In fact the casting of lots is really just finding out who to pray to so that there's the same God and they think it's going to be the same aspect but one of these gods is going to answer is their thought. But again it's all about living.

There's also this tenor of the last aspect is human effort. They are going to do what they have to do to get this to work. False fear puts a premium on human effort.

I'm going to figure this out on my own. You see them throw the cargo. wake Jonah.

[21:30] Call out to your God. What's going on? We've got to do something. Eventually you even see them after they have a lot more insight. They're still just rowing. They're trying to row against this.

They're just doing what they can to help. There's no aspect of their fear that trusts in what they're calling out to. They still are trying to do their own thing.

There's an account in Acts, Simon, the magician, not Simon Peter. Simon illustrates a little bit of this false fear and what it can look like where it has a guise of spirituality and truth.

In Acts 8, starting in verse 18, it says, when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I may lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

But Peter said to him, may your silver perish with you, because you have thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. you have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

[22 : 54] Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that if possible the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

And Simon answered, the magician comes back and says, pray for me to the Lord that nothing of what you have said may come upon me. There's no aspect of Simon's rebuke that when he's rebuked that he wants to turn and get himself right before God.

In fact, he's even asking, you pray. I'm in this for the money, but I don't want this stuff to perish, this condemnation to come upon me, so pray that that doesn't happen to me.

The sailors are very much of this ilk at this point. They're just wanting to get out of this. You pray to your God, you take care of this. Why are you sleeping?

Everybody needs to be praying on God because somebody's God has to do with this sea, this storm, and this area, and we've got to figure out who it is. But you don't get a sense of fear that causes any kind of looking outward!

[24 : 15] fear, what does true fear look like? We see a change. We see a change happen as you get to verse 7, 8, and 9.

The story starts to turn and you see a character change in the sailors. So as we get into our point, let me walk you through this transition really quickly. The sailors said, or they cast lots, and by the way, lots were basically a couple dice.

They would have a light side and a dark side, and if two showed up light on one, it was a yes, and if two showed up dark, it was a no, and if it was a mix, it was, okay, wait, or you don't get an answer right now.

Well, it was as if every sailor got these dice thrown at him, and it was black, black, black, black, white. You're the one. you sleeper.

What do you mean, you sleeper? You're the one. At that point, they had an idea, they knew for sure that he was the reason, at least from what they could see.

[25 : 23] Now, we know from Proverbs 16 that the loss is cast in the lap, but every decision is from the Lord. So, what does he say? After a series of questions, I am a Hebrew.

I fear the Lord, God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land. He answered actually every one of their questions, where are you from, what people are you, except, all by saying, I'm a Hebrew, because that described, I'm from Israel, it would be this God, I'm this lineage, I'm this type of, I'm a Jew of race, but he didn't answer their question what his occupation was.

He just says, I fear the Lord. Does he? Well, he's fearing him now, he's telling truth. And so, what happens as a result of this short confession?

The first aspect we see in the sailors is that they pray to the one true God. There's no more grabbing for every entity that's out there.

They know who to pray to now. In verse 14, the word to whom they prayed to in verse 5, the one in verse 5 was Elohe, or the root of Elohim.

[26 : 51] We've heard that before. Just a God. It could be deity or it could be the God. Verse 14 is Yahweh. They're using the covenant name of God that Israel would use.

it's the name for our God. True fear does not reflect frantic praying. It reflects calm.

I know who my God is and I am laying it. It's Hezekiah laying. Look at what these people are doing. They're coming to me. God, you are my God. I can rest in you.

Stonewall Jackson was known. He got his name Stonewall because he was standing like a stone wall in the midst of battle as if there was nothing going on.

His countenance sort of didn't change. He asked about that and his bravery. He said, my religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death.

[27 : 58] I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready no matter what and when it may overtake me. Captain, that is the way all men should live. Then all would be equally brave.

That is the type of prayer and attitude towards a God that you are not frantic about. There's a lot of reason to be fearful in the Civil War when cannon balls can take your head off and bullets are flying everywhere, especially the battles that he was in.

A second aspect is that there's now fear outside of yourself, or I'm sorry, concern for others outside of yourself. We see that in verse 12 and 13.

Jonah says, when they ask what must we do, he says, you've got to throw me in. So these sailors now have their final answer.

They actually have a word from the Lord, the prophet. They don't know he's a prophet, but they know he fears the Lord, and he's the only one that has the answers, and he's saying, you've got to throw me in the water. They start rowing towards land.

[29 : 19] Now we talked about this. We know that this can also look like the human effort that we talked about the other way. But there's an aspect of this to where they now have concern for humanity. Even if this man is guilty, they have trouble with the idea of just throwing him overboard.

And say, let's do what we can to save this man's life. That's essentially the heart of these men. These are hardened sailors. Not only are they hardened in the sense that they're sailors and they do what they do and go through storms and so but they're harsh men.

They're not the warmest of individuals. And they have concern for this man's life. They had a care for Jonah. There's also a concern for sin.

Now, it's not a mature concern. They don't know all about sin. But if you look at verse 7, there's the word evil, that this evil may have been caused. It can also be translated calamity.

But when you look at verse 14, look at what they say. When they're crying out to the Lord, look at how they're praying. O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life.

[30 : 30] Lay not on us innocent blood. You don't pray that if you don't realize not only is this a God that controls the seas, but He can judge right and wrong.

And He's sitting on His throne meeting out justice of who's sinning and who's not. And their prayer is laced with this is not just a God that spins up the world, sets it off, and there's no concern over mankind.

There's a concern for sin now. There's a concern for what we have done in the matter. There's a repentance that's required. Do not destroy us.

fear is it glorifies us. It feels as if we are killing this man innocently, and that's not right.

They do not have this conviction of heart in the beginning of the storm. Their heart has been softened. It's being softened.

[31 : 38] the last aspect of a true fear is it glorifies the true God, even when the danger is over.

Verse 10, after hearing the proclaimed truth of who Jonah is, where he's from, and what he's done to cause this whole thing, because actually they even know now that he's fleeing from the presence of the Lord.

They know the whole story, or a lot of it. They're fearful. There's two times that they go from just being afraid to exceedingly afraid.

I don't know if you noticed that. That's a change. Waru is afraid. I don't know my Hebrew. Waru is afraid, which is what they had when the storm was going on.

Gedolah Waru is exceedingly afraid. And there's only two times you see it. When he says, I am a Hebrew, I fear the Lord, God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land, they are exceedingly afraid.

[32 : 49] Truth has been preached, they now know the situation, and they are overwhelmed with a new type of fear. This is a new type of fear. And then the second is at the end of the whole passage.

They finally throw Jonah in, in verse 15. Verse 16, the sea is calm, and they're exceedingly afraid. They're out of it. They're out of the woods. It's a calm sea. It's time to go on to Tarshish. No. It's time to sacrifice and make vows to this God that they've never heard of before this trip.

But they now know who he is. He's not just the God of one thing. He's the God of all things. He's not only concerned with my life, he's concerned with all life. He's not only concerned that I get out of this, he's concerned that my heart is right before God in sin and calls me to repentance.

And he's not a God that just I can call to when the chips are down. He cares about me when it's calm. There's a right response to the Lord. There's another, there was another ocean journey in Mark 4 that your pastor and mine led us through.

[34 : 15] Verse 35 to 41, on that day when the evening had come and he said to them, let us go across to the other side. This is Jesus with his disciples. And leaving the crowd, they took him, with them in the boat, just as he was, and the other boats were with him.

And a great windstorm arose. The winds and waves were breaking the boat so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, fast asleep on a cushion.

And they woke him and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? And he awoke and he rebuked the wind saying to the sea, peace, be still.

And the wind ceased and there was a great calm and he said to them, why are you afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, who then is this? The question Bill's been asking us the entire journey through Mark. Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? As New Testament believers, we are no longer called to look back at Christ and make a physical sacrifice like these sailors did.

[35 : 30] They didn't make a physical sacrifice. The sacrifice that was going to make it final for them was in the boat and calming the storm. But there was one that had the answer that was asleep in both situations.

One was running from the providence of God to avoid calling out and calling people to repentance. The other was asleep calling all to repentance and has the power to save all men.

But the fear of the Lord is the same. We need to have awe of our God. We read his words and we need to take a step back and say Lord you are God.

How great thou art. You are a God of wonders. The final point is what is our role in times that we would consider God's providence.

We have a great storm. The man of God was asleep at the switch. He needed woken up and he was still on his downward journey.

[36 : 41] He has not hit the bottom. He has not hit rock bottom yet because of the gravity of his sin and where God needs to take him personally. But on even a backslidden journey he speaks truth.

A captain says arise. By the way it's the same arise that God used when he said arise go to Nineveh. The captain saying arise you sleeper. I think God's trying to tell Jonah something in every which way.

But he testifies. He testifies of truth. He tells the truth of what he knows. I am a Hebrew. Not I was a Hebrew.

I am a Hebrew. Not I did fear God. I do fear God. My occupation that I'm using to use now almost as if Jonah is saying is my job description is I'm a Christian and I fear the Lord.

He doesn't say he's a prophet. It's almost like it's word to us as people that aren't prophets. What can you do in a storm? What can you do when the chips are down? What can you do when there's emotion and fury around you?

[38 : 01] You can say you fear the God of heaven. You can say you know who the one true God is. You can say I have answers.

I don't have every answer but have the answer of the God that has them all. I know who he is. Friends, this imperfect sinning believer testifies of God and his grace to a dying people, a dying pagan group.

Not because he's a prophet but because he simply fears the Lord. You and I have answers. sometimes the type of answers we give, sometimes the way in which we give answers tells humanity a lot.

I left a verse for you, Philippians 2. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Your testimony is part of God's providence. You may not have all of the answers from scripture in a situation, but when things are going bad, are you grumbling or complaining?

[39 : 31] Because you lose the baby with the bath water sometimes just by our own attitudes in these situations. Are you calm and can trust that what's going on, there's an answer, there's a God of this providence, even in a tiny matter, even in something simple.

We need to be people of a resolve, honest, fear of the Lord that has a testimony, that has a testimony of who we are.

If you're a Christian today, you're part of God's church, Christ's church, and He has specific providence for you. He wants you to be His lights in the world.

You are part, you are now one of the lights that's the city on the hill. It's made up of you and me. I'm going to read, I'm going to close by reading the words of a contemporary Christian song that's out right now.

As I've meditated on them, they also move me in the same way the hymn we're about to sing moves me. It has the same basic idea. This current song is called Symphony. It's by a group called Switch.

[40 : 49] The hymn is called It Is Well. And we know It Is Well was written by somebody who, after passing over the spot where his family went down, his daughters went down in a boat in a storm, he penned this hymn.

Having had a calm come over him, knowing the God of Providence had a plan, even in that. Sometimes it's hard to breathe.

All the thoughts are shouting at me, trying to bring me to my knees, and it's overwhelming.

Darkness echoes all around, feels like everything is crashing down.

Still I know where my hope is found. To my heart do you beat? Let me be your melody, even when I cannot see, but you orchestrate it, even when the dark surrounds.

You'll never let me drown. I know that my hope is found in the name of Jesus. You say you're working everything for my good, and I believe every word.

[41 : 58] Because even in the madness there is peace, drowning out the voices all around me. Through all the chaos, you were writing a symphony. Let's pray.

Our Heavenly Father, your ways are higher than our ways. There are so many situations of life. Even me, trying to find my notes this morning to come to church, where I had to stop and just realize that you had everything in control. And we have to just stop and realize that you have everything in control.

Lord, help us, teach us to be, help us to learn, as Jonah was even having a hard time learning from soldiers that were pagans, that there can be a trust and a resolve in fearing you in a miraculous way, and awe and fear of you can lead to great peace and great hope.

And Lord, help us to have the words on our lips and at the minimum the countenance of hope to a twisted and crooked and dying generation.

[43 : 13] Give us your spirit to help us in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen.NINGNINGNINGNING