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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, April 24, 2024 - Ezekiel's Fear of the Lord

APRIL 24TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Why did Rahab betray the city of Jericho to the invading Israelites (Joshua 2)? She told the two spies: “I know that the LORD has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. ...When we heard of it [Israel’s victories], our hearts melted in fear and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”

Because the people of Jericho stood against God, fear of the Lord was just plain fear. But when Rahab switched sides, she chose to worship the one true God. Her fear turned to awe, reverence, and delight. Ezekiel felt similarly in this passage. While initially overwhelmed by his visions of God, he later felt strengthened and called to ministry (see chapters 2–3).

Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him.

EZEKIEL 1:28

At first, Ezekiel saw what looked like a windstorm, with clouds and flashing lightning. When it came closer, he saw four angels (cherubim) with otherworldly appearances (vv. 5–14, 22–24) and the wheels-within-wheels by which they moved (vv. 15–21). They were impressive, but they were only God’s messengers, or attendants.

Finally, God is described indirectly by way of a vaulted sky, a throne, and “a figure like that of a man” (vv. 25–28). His appearance like glowing metal and fire represents God’s power and glory. He’s also compared to a rainbow’s appearance after the rain. The passage informs us

that this was only “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.” A direct description or vision wasn’t possible.

When he saw this vision, Ezekiel “fell facedown” in extreme awe, humility, and respect (v. 28). Many others in Scripture have also done so, including Abram (Gen. 17:3) and the three disciples during the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:6).

Go Deeper

What exactly is holy fear? How can the fear of the Lord overwhelm us and yet at the same time draw us nearer to Him?

Pray with Us: Ezekiel saw only “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord” (Ezek. 1:28). Thank you, Lord, for speaking to us through Your Son who is “the radiance of God’s glory” (Heb. 1:3).

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 23, 2024 - The

Wife Who Fears the Lord

APRIL 23RD 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 23, 2024 - The Wife Who Fears the Lord

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A good woman is priceless! Nonetheless, Salary.com recently tried to appraise the financial value of a stay-at-home mom. Based on the market value of the skills she needs and uses daily, their analysis estimated that her annual salary should be \$184,820.

But, according to Proverbs 31, her character is even more valuable than outward factors. We need to understand that the “wife of noble character”—literally, “a woman of valor” (v. 10)—

A woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

PROVERBS 31:30

ideal, not an individual person. The climax

of the description is found in today’s verse: “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (v. 30). This brings the Book of Proverbs full circle from the first chapter (1:7).

What virtues and actions are associated with her fear of the Lord? She works hard (vv. 13–15, 17, 19, 27), plans wisely (and so “can laugh at the days to come” because she’s not anxious, v. 25), and has good business sense (vv. 16, 18, 24). She’s strong (v. 17), dignified (v. 25), and wise (v. 26). She’s generous toward the poor (v. 20; Prov. 14:31). She takes good care of her family (vv. 15, 21–22, 27), including teaching her children and guiding them toward maturity (v. 26). She supports her husband and he in turn has full confidence in her (vv. 11–12). He’s respected in the community, in part because of her (v. 23). She, too, is respected in the community and praised by her family (vv. 28, 31).

Such a woman’s outward actions flow from her inward virtues, and these in turn flow from her overall orientation of fearing the Lord. The “wife of noble character,” then, is an ideal we can all learn from!

Go Deeper

How might we, men and women, cultivate our inward orientations and virtues? Our culture pushes us toward outward appearances, our brand, our image. How can the fear of the Lord help us resist this?

Pray with Us: Lord, if we are honest, the Proverbs 31 woman seems unrealistic and often intimidating. But, like her, we follow the same God who guides and gives gifts. Help us, men and women, to become people “of noble character” (Prov. 31:10).

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Daily Devotional - Monday, April 22, 2024 - Fear of the Lord and Protection

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In 1985, the Texas Department of Transportation started an anti-littering campaign that, as we would say today, went viral: “Don’t mess with Texas.” Since then, this well-known slogan has become a distinctive indicator of Texan pride and swagger.

The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah.

For King Jehoshaphat, living in the fear of the Lord, and leading his people to do the same, meant trusting in God’s protection. This didn’t mean he sat on his hands. He made strategic military decisions as well (vv. 1–2). His heart, like David’s, was devoted to the Lord (vv. 3–6). He did not seek idols, and he removed many places of idolatry from around the country. He sought the Lord and followed His commands. He also sent court officials and Levites on a Scripture teaching tour (vv. 7–9). In all of this, the Lord was with him and helped establish his kingdom (see April 10).

The fear of the Lord has a flip side. From the inside, it means awe, reverence, love, obedience, and worship. We draw nearer to God. But from the outside, it means only fear—seeing God at work, but choosing not to worship Him. One day these unrepentant, terrified people will call the mountains to fall on them (Luke 23:30).

Go Deeper

Jesus, we praise You today as our shield and protector! “The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Prov. 18:10). When we encounter obstacles and opposition in our lives, may we run to You.

Go Deeper

Pray with Us: Jesus, we praise You today as our shield and protector! “The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Prov. 18:10). When we encounter obstacles and opposition in our lives, may we run to You.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 16, 2024 - House of Wisdom

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On the road to the Celestial City in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian stops to rest at the Palace Beautiful. There he meets four sisters— Discretion, Piety, Prudence, and Charity (that is, Love). They listen to the story of his journey and teach him valuable spiritual truths. They also encourage him with a vision of the future (Immanuel's Land) and outfit him in the armor of God, which he will soon need for his battle with the demon Apollyon.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,

Similarly, in Proverbs 9, we are called to visit the House of Wisdom (vv. 1–4). Her house is a welcoming place. Wisdom has set her table for a banquet and served invitations. The meal will be delicious. The

and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

PROVERBS 9:10

“seven pillars” of her house symbolize perfection. Who is especially invited (vv. 4–6)? The “simple,” meaning those who are young, naive, or immature. They lack sense, but they can grow and eventually learn to “walk in the way of insight.”

Who is more likely to accept or reject Wisdom’s invitation (vv. 7–9)? Those who are humble enough to accept instruction, correction, and rebuke will probably accept the invitation to learn more. Those who are unwilling, however—the mocker and the fool—will reject the invitation and even respond to it with insults and abuse. Frankly, how we respond to the invitation indicates which category we belong to or desire to join.

The rewards of wisdom are clear (v. 11). Wisdom leads to long life and blessing (see Prov. 10:27). By contrast, for those who enter the House of Folly, “her guests are deep in the realm of the dead” (v. 18). Where does the journey to wisdom start? The answer is the same as we’ve seen in recent devotions: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (v. 10).

Go Deeper

Verses 13–18 give a contrasting invitation to the House of Folly. In what ways does this invitation differ from the first? Which features of both stand out to you and why?

Pray with Us: Our Father, how we want to reach the House of Wisdom, to eat at the Wisdom’s banquet! We want to “walk in the way of insight” (Prov. 9:6). Guide us to this House every step of the way, we pray, and keep us away from the House of Folly.

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

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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!"

Great are the works of the LORD; they are

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 belongs eternal praise.”

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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