

Solomon is writing to his son and heir apparent. As part of the canon he is also writing to all the young boys (and girls) down through the ages. The book of proverbs is not only a manual on living the practical Christian life and as such is timeless in its application but it is a book on fearing the Lord. All men and women down through the ages can profit from its pages. Fearing the Lord means incorporating the Lord into every area of our live.

In our introduction we have learned that God is interested in every detail of our lives, in fact, he plans every detail of our lives and has, himself, a dossier on each one of us¹.

God has "smiled" at us, that's the root meaning of grace - to find grace in God's eyes, a frequent phrase found in the old testament, means for the eyes of the benefactor to "light up" in a gracious attitude toward the beneficiary. Because of God's "smile," he has set in motion a plan of redemption whereby man may find the Lord and have a right relationship with him.

Man, also, has thought of God. But because of his total depravity he is not only not able to seek him², but is, indeed, his enemy³. Man spends his life up to the point of salvation with a desperate need of salvation from his sinful condition but completely helpless⁴ in that condition to help himself out of that hell-bound state called "lost."

The Fear of God, a Fountain of Life.

Prov 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death. NIV

Man has always had a thirst for God. It's just that he needs reconciliation with God. In this beautiful word picture a *heaven sent* fear of God is a fountain that gives life. The picture is so graphic in my mind. I can remember traveling across the dry, hot,

¹ "Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." *Psalms 139:16, NIV*

² Rom 3:11 "there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹²All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." *NIV*

³ "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" *Rom 5:10, NIV*

⁴ Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. *NIV*

desert-like part of Oregon during my "crusaders quartet" days. We were all so hot and thirsty! The inside of our mouths were actually dry. We came to what seemed the end of the road we were traveling on and right at the end of this road was a road-side version of "Orange Julius." Well, we drove straight on into their parking lot and each ordered a tall glass of freshly squeezed orange juice poured on top of crushed ice. I'll never forget the immense relief from the first swallow of that juice!

A saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is that first big taste, the swallow that becomes the sinner's refreshing fountain of life⁵. It was the heaven sent fear of God that was the beginning of knowing him. Until that heavenly swallow, man's efforts to find God always brought frustration, guilt - a never-ending effort to appease the angry god he had conjured up in his darkened imagination, a bitter taste indeed!

Look at the word "turning" in our passage - it means to call back, to snatch away from. This is the call of wisdom - it is a call, a turning back, a snatching from the trap of death. The trap is a noose, a snare that is used to catch an unsuspecting animal, and strangle it to death.

Jesus Christ is our fountain of life - the fear of the Lord (in responding to the gospel call after conviction of our sin) introduces us to the quencher of our thirst for God.

John 4:13 **Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."**

Look at Proverbs 9:10; **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."** We cannot escape the fact that in pursuing wisdom, while observing the teachings of our user's manual we will be maintained in right relationship with the Holy One, Jesus Christ. When Solomon was writing this book on wisdom, the Holy Spirit had in mind that Jesus Christ is our wisdom

The Fear of God, a New Beginning.

Prov 9:10 **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**

Psalm 147:11 **The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.**

The fear of God has both a centrifugal and a centripetal aspect to it - let me illustrate. The earth orbits around the sun in a very precarious path. What keeps it from plunging into the fiery surface of the sun or from leaving it orbit to a lifeless, frigid existence are the two opposing forces set in motion by our Creator. First, the centrifugal force keeps the earth in an outward force from plunging into the sun. Then

⁵ Psalm 34:8 "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

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the centripetal force from the sun's gravity keeps a constant life-giving tug on the earth, defining a perfect path and we have just the right orbit for life here on earth.

The life-giving fear of God is just like that. On one hand there is the awesome white-hot glory of God that would instantly destroy a man if he were to as much as look into his face. On the other hand, there is the "tug" of the love and person of God, attracting the sinner to himself. Isaiah's call (and probably his conversion) gives us insight into these two opposing forces of the fear of God. The psalmist says it so clearly - here's the centripetal - the "pulling/attracting" aspect of the fear of God. True fear of God does not run away from his presence but is attracted to him. How can mercy be equated with the fear of God? It is because of the mercy of God. The sinner is driven by the sinfulness of his sin and the awfulness of God's justice **into the arms of his mercy.**

The Awfulness of the Sinner's Sin
and the Attractiveness of God's Mercy.

Isaiah 6:5 **"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."**

Isaiah had just seen the glory of God in the temple. In the white-hot glare of God's glory Isaiah stood there "ruined" - brought to complete silence because of his sinful condition. But there was the centripetal aspect of the fear of God - Isaiah didn't run from the temple - he stood there transfixed, drawn by the "gravitational pull" of the person of God.

The next moment is a perfect example of this "gravitational pull" of the fear of God; Isaiah 6:6 **"Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. No '4 easy steps to God's wonderful plan' here! Isaiah must have been scared out of his wits! The seraph used tongs to lift a white hot coal from the brazen altar and proceeded to place it on his mouth - its searing heat must have burned his face as the seraph approached him. ⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'"**

Not only was Isaiah called to the ministry at this point but I believe he was also converted.

Saul had a similar vision; **"As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied."** Paul's conversion was so remarkable that the former murderer and legalist became the church's greatest defender and promoter of God's grace! What a wonderful example of the fear of God affecting a person. Paul, at once, felt the hot blaze of the glory of God and the

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overwhelming pull of his sovereign person and responded without hesitation **"Who are you, Lord?"**

I'm not suggesting that we all need to have such a dramatic experience in order to be saved. What I am saying is that all sinners need to come to that place where he is absolutely convicted that he is a sinner and is lost and then in the fear of the Lord, feeling the fire of his convicting glory and yet the irresistible pull of his love say "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

As believers, we need the fear of God or we will not learn from this book, Proverbs, God's manual on the practical Christian life.