

God Will Understand

The Fear of God

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A couple of weekends ago, Sue and I were listening to a radio program in which the interviewer was questioning an Arab man. We did not catch his identity, but he sounded like a college professor or possibly an international businessman from the way he was speaking. He was explaining, from a relatively fair viewpoint, what the West must understand about Arabs and Muslims.

He said that Arabic is a language with no real "tense," that is, it is very hard to tell when something happens. For the most part the language has no past, no present, and no future in the concrete way English does. You cannot tell when something took place, is taking place, or will take place. So, there is a certain amount of confusion when speaking Arabic. But if you have grown up in that culture, you have become accustomed to it and used to it, and it works as a language for you.

In addition to this, according to this Arab man, there are no words to show the possession or ownership of something. He said no international businessman in his right mind will sign a contract that is written in Arabic because of this confusion as to ownership. When transactions are made between Arabs, they strongly want to use a language other than Arabic—they will use English, French, Italian, or Spanish. But they will not use Arabic. How do you write a contract in a language that has no ownership?

The Koran is written primarily, if not totally, in Arabic. According to this well-educated Arab man, the Koran is not chronological in its order. It is sporadic, chaotic. It has no true organization and is somewhat random in its style. He also said that since the Koran contradicts itself constantly, it is actually unreliable as a doctrinal work. (This is an Arab man who was raised a Muslim, but now, from what I understand, lives in the United States. So he is being quite candid about the religion as well as the language.)

The Muslim terrorists have found all this so frustrating that they have been making up words to justify their *jihad* (or *madradine*, but I think *madradine* is a made-up word in this past century.) They just do not know what to call their "holy war," so they come up with terms to justify what they are trying to accomplish. Basically, they are defining their religious beliefs as they go along—as is convenient for the moment. The attitude is that they want to force God to do things their way. So they make up the religion as they go along.

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This is a form of the same "situation ethics" that mainstream Christianity is struggling with now and comes from the same satanic author. Unlike Arabic and the Koran—the one true God is very clear in His written Word as to the moral, ethical, and relationship laws of human life. But people around the world, who believe that there is a God, think—"God will understand if I choose how to live my own life."

In his journal, on October 6, 1866, Henri Amiel insightfully wrote this about human beings: "We are always making God our accomplice, that so we may legalize our own iniquities." Boy, he hit that on the head.

Many people have reasoned with regard to their presumptuous sins—"God will understand."

Will God understand our self-justification for our own sin?

Will He come around to see it our way?

Will He ever want to understand it our way?

Make no mistake about it, God **will** understand! But His understanding will not be what most people think.

Self-justification, by way of human reasoning, is one of the most blinding traits of human beings and it is fueled by pride. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word translated pride, in most places, is translated "presumptuous" in keeping with the context.

Psalm 19:12-13 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.

The word "presumptuous" here in verse 13 is noticeably designed to contrast with the "secret faults" mentioned in verse 12.

The Hebrew word for presumptuous or pride there is *zed*, from which "presumptuous" is translated. In its basic sense, it means "that which is boiling, swelling, inflated;" then "proud, arrogant;" with the accessory notion of shameless sinfulness. It's the attitude behind the self-justification that "God will understand."

The prevailing thought in verses 12 and 13 is that of pride, and the reference is especially to sins that proceed from self-confidence and from reliance on one's own strength. The word does not mean open sins, or flagrant sins, so much as those that spring from self-reliance or pride.

The psalmist's prayer is mainly that he might have a proper distrust of himself, and might not be left by an improper reliance on his own power to the commission of sin.

What is it that we sometimes think God understands when we make that comment or something similar—"God will understand"?

I asked some of you what examples came to mind when you heard someone say something similar to, "God will understand." Here are paraphrased excuses that I have either heard personally, or that some of you have told me in the last year or so.

It's Friday evening just before sunset (that is setting...)—"I'll just finish this work up so my boss won't get upset, even though it will keep me here when the Sabbath begins."—God will understand.

"I can't go to the Feast this year because I have college classes that I can't miss."—God will understand.

"I have to take my contagious, sick child to Sabbath services or else I may miss something. I hope we don't infect anyone." —God will understand. Another version: "I have been sick all week and I am still contagious, but I cannot miss services."—God will certainly understand.

"I know that was a sin but, I'm only human."—God will understand.

"I know I shouldn't smoke or get drunk but, I'm working on it."—God will understand.

"I know I'm severely overweight, but it's not my fault. God made me this way."—So God understands.

"Don't blame me, blame God for not perfecting me more quickly." "I'm just not there yet"—God will understand.

"But, I have to travel across the country on the Sabbath. What else am I supposed to do?"—God will understand.

The list of mistakes we try to justify is endless! I am sure that you can add to this list yourself the things that we use to justify our actions that are of a sinful nature.

One of the greatest deceptions that mainstream Christianity has convinced people of, is that "God loves us just the way we are." If that is the case, then why is He working to change us? And why does He require that the old worldly man be totally replaced by the new righteous man?

Ephesians 4:20-24 But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The new man refers to our renovated nature. This is called, in other places, the "new creature" or "the new creation," and refers to the condition after our hearts are changed. We have new feelings, new principles, and new desires. It means we have discarded our old principles and practices, and, in everything that pertains to moral character, we become new. It also means to rid ourselves of excuses!

In Job 15, Eliphaz answers Job's claims in chapters 12-14 to be esteemed wise. Eliphaz replied that Job's attitude was manifested in his incoherent choice of words, and that this alone was sufficient to expose his lack of wisdom. A wise man would not be guilty of "mere talk," or of using language that conveyed no ideas. Job had been rambling, in the previous chapters, and to Eliphaz this showed his confusion of mind.

Job 15:1-6 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: "Should a wise man answer with empty knowledge, and fill himself with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or by speeches with which he can do no good? Yes, you cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God. For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty. Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; yes, your own lips testify against you.

The reply that Job made to the arguments of his friends in previous chapters was referred to as empty or vain knowledge. Some Bible margins have, "Knowledge of

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wind." The "wind," of course, is used to represent aimless changing. Here it is used as a metaphor of remarks that were unproductive, pointless, and irrelevant to the problems at hand.

Then Eliphaz asked, "Should a man fill his mind with insignificant arguments or sentiments—as inappropriate for usefulness as the east wind is for food?" The image is that he filled himself with mere wind, and then blows it out under pretense of delivering proverbs of wisdom.

The east wind was used in verse 2 to express not only a tempestuous wind of the Middle East, but one that is stifling, and destructive to vegetation. It passed over immense deserts, and was characterized by severe dryness and heat. Job had been making excuses without backing it up with substance or facts. Therefore, to Eliphaz, his words were like the east wind.

In verse 4, fear refers to the fear or reverence of God. Job had not maintained a proper admiration or respect for his Creator in his argument. He had defended principles and made assertions that implied disrespect to God. We see a little of this in Job's words of the previous chapter, where Job says,

Job 14:19-20 As water wears away stones, and as torrents wash away the soil of the earth; so You destroy the hope of man. You prevail forever against him, and he passes on; you change his countenance and send him away.

We see there the negative attitude Job had there, at this point. He was showing a lack of the fear of God.

In Job 15:4, where we read a little earlier, Eliphaz does not refer as much to what was personal with Job, as to his principles in general. Eliphaz was not accusing Job of losing all reverence for God, but that if Job's arguments continued in the same direction, they would lead him to eventually come to the point of losing all His fear of God—which is an extremely dangerous place to be. Job was indirectly accusing God of not being fair to human beings. By doing this, Job was showing a lack of the fear of God.

In verse 5, we see Job being accused of distorted reasoning. Eliphaz accused Job of resorting to immature thinking, such as a child may use, instead of arguing his case with wisdom and sincerity and emotional maturity.

Job's whole discourse, according to Eliphaz, was a clever work of art, designed to make

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his friends feel sorry for him and to get them to recognize his devoutness to God. By painting this presumed picture of how God works, Job unintentionally gave a distorted view of the government of God. Of course, he later came to realize and was horrified at his own attitude.

We sometimes use this same human reasoning, accusing God of not caring enough about us. So, we self-justify our own short-comings by reasoning that God doesn't really care about our lesser sins. But, the "little things" we do—whether righteous or unrighteous—do count in God's eyes. He does care about what we do, whether great or small.

Luke 16:10 "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."

God does pay attention to the small, little things that we do that we may think that He may overlook.

In verse 6 of Job, Job was accused of condemning himself with the words of his own mouth—as we do when we say, "God will understand." Or we might say some variation of that.

This lecture that Eliphaz gave Job closely relates to what we go through today when we make excuses to others in the church for why we do certain things. When I asked for examples of the "God will understand" reasoning from you, one of the most common incidents you mentioned was with regard to self-justifications for not attending Sabbath or holy day services. Here are some of the lame excuses that you told me about that this reminded you of:

"I stayed home from services because I had a tiring week and needed to rest."—God will understand.

"I stayed home from services because I wanted to spend the time getting closer to God." —God will understand. (Over the past 20 years, I have heard at least a half a dozen people use those very words. I am just mind-boggled by that. How do you get closer to God by staying home from services? It just does not compute.)

"I stayed home from services because I didn't have anything to wear."—God will understand.

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"On the Sabbath, I listen to services in my home, so I don't dress properly to appear before God because no one sees me anyway."—God will understand.

But God does see. God sees all of this.

Note these words clearly: God **will** understand! He will understand that we just don't care to make the effort to worship and reverence Him.

What was it that Eliphaz accused Job of? He said, "you cast off fear." That fear is referring to the fear of God! So what he was accusing Job of was casting off the fear of God.

Job did have the fear of God before his major trials began. We can read about that in the first two chapters of Job. God actually said that Job was a man who feared Him. So it is something that we can slip away from if we are not careful.

Even though we are in the process of conversion to God's way of thinking, His thoughts are not completely our thoughts, nor are our ways completely His ways.

Isaiah 55:6-7 Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Let that ring in your mind for a moment. Most mainstream Christians misinterpret the principle of God's abundant pardoning. I think too many people stop there and say, "God will understand and He will pardon me." They think all they have to do is repent later when it's a more convenient time for them, or just in time for the resurrection. God does not think like we do! Just because He's silent doesn't mean He approves or forgives our actions.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

In verse 7, Isaiah admonished that the first step a sinner must take is to forsake his way

in order to seek and fear God. The Hebrew word for "thoughts" includes all that is the object of thought as well as the thought itself. And the idea is that we must abandon our worldly plans and purposes of life. To a holy God, our thoughts are not less important than our external actions. No one can obtain God's favor who is not ready to abandon his own opinions, his pride and vanity, his plans of pleasure-seeking, and his purposes of life that are opposed to God.

Verses 7 and 8 are connected with the subject of pardon; the plans and purposes of God in regard to forgiveness are as far above those of people as the heavens are higher than the earth.

The average person finds it difficult to pardon or forgive someone for personal injury. We have all had to struggle with this. Humanly, we tend to harbor malice; we seek revenge; and we are slow to forgive. Not so with God. He harbors no malice; He has no desire of revenge; He has no reluctance to forgive. If we do not forgive others—we think to ourselves God will understand. What God will understand is that His love is not developing in us!

Even if we have forgiven once, most people are slow to forgive a second time, and still more reluctant to forgive a third time, and if the offense is often repeated, we refuse to forgive altogether. Not so with God. No matter how often we have broken His law, yet upon our true repentance he can forgive all our iniquities.

Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

I think we all understand that the principle here is that there is no limit to the number of times we are to forgive someone.

God's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not ours in regard to His whole creation and government. He has plans for accomplishing His purposes that are different from ours, and He secures our own welfare by plans that contradict our own plans.

He disappoints our hopes; foils our expectations; crosses our designs; removes our property, or our friends; and thwarts our worldly purposes in life. He leads us in a path that we had not intended and secures our ultimate happiness in modes that are contrary

to all our own desires and designs.

It follows from this, then: 1) We should form our plans with submission to the higher purposes of God; 2) We should resign ourselves to Him when He chooses to thwart our plans, and to take away our comforts; 3) That we should never assume that God overlooks sin that is committed in weakness.

So instead of saying, "God will understand," we should say, "God's will be done. If I am to be punished for this sin, then so be it. Forgive me, please."

God not only does not recognize our thoughts to be like His if we sin, He says He does not even know us, if we sin.

Luke 13:22-28 And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' [In a sense, you could say, "We attended Your services and we listened to Your ministers speak.] "But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

It is amazing how far we will go in deceiving ourselves about the appropriateness of our actions.

Let me give you a shameful example that was expressed to me by another minister of God's church about a member of God's church. There was a man in the WCG who was not satisfied with his own wife. So he began targeting and seducing other ladies in the church. He did not care whether they were married or not. He singled out two women whom he wanted. He caused one woman to leave her husband and marry him after he dumped his wife. When confronted with this very serious sin, his justification and excuse was, in his own words, "God will understand!"

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His inference was that God would overlook his sin because he thought it was the right thing to do. He is making a misguided assumption that God thinks like he does. His faulty human reasoning is not based on truth—far from it.

Well, God **will** understand alright! But not in the way this man thinks. God knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly will die.

Psalms 50 is addressed to His saints, as verse 5 verifies, "Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Then in Psalm 50:16-17, Asaph, announcing God's second charge, criticized the nation's hypocritical living. He first rebuked the wicked for reciting His laws and speaking of His covenant as their profession of faith, while they actually hated God's instruction. Though these wicked people assembled with those who loved God—the saints—He knew their evil hearts. God knew the evil hearts of those who met with the saints but still sinned flagrantly.

Psalm 50:16-17 But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you?"

Then in verses 18 through 21, the psalmist selected several examples of their wickedness. While appearing righteous, they tolerated and took part in theft, adultery, and also slander is mentioned. God warned them not to confuse His patience with His approval. God's silence did not mean that He agreed with their actions. Instead, He rebuked them directly to their face, in this case.

Psalm 50:18-21 When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes.

In verse 21, the idea is that they thought or imagined that God was just like themselves in their thinking, and they acted under this impression. Their conduct appeared to portray how God was, but in reality they were acting in a way that matched the "good" they had created in their own minds—what **they** thought was good, but in reality was evil.

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That is, they thought that God would be satisfied with their "forms" of religion, and that all He required was the proper offering of sacrifice, according to "their" views of the nature of religion.

They believed that God did not care about principle, justice, pure morality, and sincerity, because they didn't care about it themselves. They thought He would not be strict in punishing sin, or to correct them for it, if these forms or rituals were kept up. They thought if they went through the outward actions of looking pious or looking righteous, then God would accept that alone.

Psalm 50:22-23 "Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."

Speaking of Psalm 50:16-23, John Ritenbaugh commented in his recent *Forerunner* magazine *Personal* "The Elements of Motivation (Part Two): Vision." It relates directly to what we are talking about here.

This warning is aimed at the church in general but specifically at those who fellowship with the church but are wicked by God's own judgment! Their wickedness identifies them as having departed from the way of God, even though they still give the outward appearance that they are saints by virtue of attending Sabbath services with the saints. These people are living in hypocrisy.

Human nature deceives us into thinking that God's patience with us—which gives us time to repent and change—is tacit approval of our conduct. Not so! He is testing us to see how serious our devotion and loyalty to Him and His purpose are. In reality, these wicked "saints" are not like Him, but human nature deceives them into ignoring this fact. They, like those of Matthew 7:23, will receive a devastating surprise in the judgment. They were warned! They may have even initially liked what they heard, but they were not motivated enough to depart from sin and correct their relationship with and witness of Him.

A very hard-hitting quote there.

The Word of God shows exactly what God **will** understand.

Hebrews 4:12-13 shows that we can't escape the notice of God; that all insincerity, unbelief, and hypocrisy will be detected by Him; and that since our hearts and minds are perfectly open before Him, we should be sincere and should not attempt to deceive Him.

The truth of God is all-penetrating and searching—the real thoughts and intents of the heart will be exposed, and if there is insincerity and self-deception, there can be no hope of escape from judgment.

Hebrews 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

The idea here is that what "God had said" is suited to detect hypocrisy and to lay open the true nature of the feelings of our minds, so that there can be no escape for the guilty. His truth is adapted to bring out the real feelings, and to show us exactly what He is, as our Creator.

Truth always has this power—whether preached, or read, or communicated by conversation, or impressed upon the memory and conscience by the Holy Spirit.

There can be no escape from the penetrating, searching application of the Word of God. The truth of God has the power to show what we really are. It is like a penetrating sword that exposes the inner parts by cutting open the whole person.

The phrase "the Word of God" in verse 12 is equivalent to the truth of God made known to our minds. It brings out the real beliefs and feelings to show us how we really are; and not only us, but also the world as a whole. When they receive the truth, their sins will be exposed.

The Word of God is living and not dead, inert, or powerless. It has a "living" power, and is energetic and active.

The Word of God is powerful. Its effect is seen in awakening our consciences; alarming our senses; laying open the secret thoughts and feelings of our minds, and causing us to tremble when we sin with the anxiety of the coming judgment. All the great improvements in society for the better have been caused by the power of truth. Societies that have deteriorated and degenerated into immoral societies, oppressive

societies, have all been freed from that slavery by God through His truth—where He makes His truth known.

The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. This phrase comes from the Greek word *distomon*, which literally means, "two-mouthed" sword. The word "mouth" was given to the sword because it seemed to "devour" everything that appeared in front of it. The 'two-mouthed sword' consumed or destroyed as a wild animal does. The comparison of the Word of God to a sword is designed to show its power of penetrating the heart. This use of this two-edged sword being powerful is found here:

Isaiah 49:2 "He has made My mouth like a sharp sword;"

Revelation 1:16 "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword,"

What a contrast this is to the soft, "lace hanky" god of the mainstream Christians! God is powerful and His Word is powerful. A lace hanky does not cut like a sword does. That is why the sword is used and not the lace hanky.

The idea is that of piercing, or penetrating; and the meaning is, that the word of God reaches the depths of the "heart"—the very center of action—and lays open our motives and our feelings.

The thoughts and intents of the heart are openly exposed by the Word of God. We are all made to see our real character under the exhibition of the truth of God in at least three ways:

1. In the light of the law we see our past lives to be sinful.
2. The exhibition of truth reminds us of many long-forgotten sins.
3. Our real feelings are exposed when the truth of God is proclaimed.

We are made to look at our motives as we had never done before, to see our real thoughts and feelings that are only exposed by displaying the truth. The displaying of the truth is like shining down the beams of the sun at midnight on a dark world. In this way the truth lays open the real beliefs and feelings of each person, as that sun would expose the wickedness that is now performed under the cover of night.

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David expressed this principle that nothing is hidden from God in Psalm 139.

Psalm 139:11-12 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

Meaning, God sees regardless of whether it is night or day here on earth.

Many people have a deep and fixed hostility toward God and to His Word who might never be exposed to it, if the truth was not faithfully proclaimed. So we see God raising people like Mr. Herbert Armstrong to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom and to proclaim God's Word and His truth to this world, so that some in this world can see their evil and their wrong ways. Of course, most ignore it. Nevertheless, they receive the witness.

The truth of God detects the true feelings of the hypocrite and self-deceiver. Because they cannot always conceal their emotions, eventually the time will come when truth, like light poured into their minds, will reveal their unbelief and their secret sins.

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

There is no living being who is not completely known to God. He distinctly understands all our feelings, our thoughts, and our plans. We are warned in Hebrews 4:13 that even in self-deception, we cannot conceal anything from God. So when we say things like, "God will understand," we are deceiving ourselves. Even then God's truth exposes us for what we are.

The Greek word *tracheelizoō* translated into the English word "open" here means: To lay bare the neck, or to bend it back, so as to expose the throat to being cut out. Our modern medical term "tracheotomy" comes from this same Greek word.

Occasionally, an accident or throat cancer from smoking, will render a person incapable of breathing through his mouth. A hole is cut at the base of the neck in the front to open the windpipe to receive air. The medical procedure is called a tracheotomy, from that same word that this word "open" is from. So you have the visual sense of what it is talking about here.

The description intended by this verb "open" is to bend back the neck of the animal, so as to expose it in front when it is slain. It generally means to make bare, removing any covering, exposing the thing entirely—as the naked neck is for the knife.

The allusion is similar to that of the sword that Paul referred to in Hebrews 4:12, as dividing the body and spirit, and the joints and marrow; and the meaning is, that in the hand of God Who held that sword, everything is exposed and nothing escapes.

In a spiritual sense, we are similar to the animal whose neck is bent back and laid bare, ready for the slaughter. Nothing hinders God from striking; there is nothing that can prevent that sword from penetrating the heart—any more than when the neck of the animal is bent back and laid bare. There is nothing that can hinder the sacrificing priest from thrusting the knife into the throat of the victim. To the power of God, all is laid bare and open.

We can be so thankful for the forgiveness that we receive from God when we genuinely repent, and we do our part to overcome those sins that we do commit.

Christ makes it clear that by our words we will be justified or condemned, including every idle word that we speak.

Matthew 12:34-37 "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

So we are thankful to see there that a good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, because that is our goal—to become a good man; to fear God and be obedient to Him.

In verse 36, the phrase "idle word" literally means a vain, thoughtless, useless word or excuse; a word that accomplishes no good. It refers, generally, to anything that is not true and helpful when spoken, such as the phrase, "God will understand."

The context gives it the sense of wicked, injurious, false, and malicious, since this was the intent of Christ's accusers.

Nothing can be concealed from God. Nothing can be hidden from His sight. Nothing can hinder Him from exposing sin. God may choose to strike in a moment or in the future, and His dreadful sentence falls on the sinner like the knife on the exposed throat of the victim.

All things are known to God. He reads every thought; sees every feeling; looks through every thought and attitude of the mind.

Religious people like to hear the words of God since they're positive and they give hope, but people don't do them because they don't have a proper fear of God. We see many religious people who put on the air, or appearance, of being good.

In my Bible, the caption over Ezekiel 33:30-33 reads, "Hearing and not doing."

Ezekiel 33:30-33 "As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.' So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

This is speaking of the punishment that will come upon those sinners who give the appearance of being very religious but in their personal lives are very sinful.

The fear of God is the main biblical theme and is distinct from the terror of God. The fear of God is the proper and elemental response of a person to God. It encompasses and builds on attitudes of awe and reverence.

This fear of God is absolutely necessary in a saint's faith. In fact, there are well over 100 references to the fear of God in the positive sense of faith and obedience. To "fear" God or be "God-fearing" is a synonym for being a follower of God. This is sometimes in implied contrast to those who do not fear Him. The fear of God is a deep, heartfelt continuing respect for Him! It is not one that comes and goes.

The sheer number of references to the fear of God signals that it is central to spiritual faith. Today, there is a relative absence of this way of thinking in our culture. And now we are seeing the beginning of the inherent result of the lack of it. What we are seeing is our society disintegrating before our eyes because of a lack of the fear of the one true God. And His truth is exposing those sins, not just daily but hourly.

What images should we associate with this mysterious "fear of God", this elusive fear of God that this world has no clue of?

The actions most frequently associated with fear of God are serving God (I Samuel 12:24) and obedience to His commandments, among others. Here Samuel is speaking at Saul's coronation.

I Samuel 12:13-15 "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the LOORD has set a king over you. If you fear the LOORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LOORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LOORD your God. However, if you do not obey the voice of the LOORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LOORD, then the hand of the LOORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

I Samuel 12:19-25 And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LOORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves." Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LOORD, but serve the LOORD with all your heart. And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty [That could also be "speak empty things."] things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. For the LOORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LOORD to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LOORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the LOORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

We see there both very encouraging words, written directly to the church of God as well as to Israel, and we also see warnings, areas to avoid. What else is the fear of the Lord

connected with?

The fear of the Lord is linked to wisdom and is part of the covenant between God and His people. I will quickly read three scriptures that relate to this.

Proverbs 15:33 "The fear of the LOORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility."

Psalms 25:14 "The secret of the LOORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

Psalms 103:17-18 "But the mercy of the LOORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them."

To fear God is to be in awe and reverence of Him and to trust Him. Two scriptures on that are:

Psalms 33:8 "Let all the earth fear the LOORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him."

Malachi 2:5 "My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, and I gave them to him that he might fear Me; so he feared Me And was reverent before My name."

Fearing God means hating and avoiding evil. We often think of the positive side of the fear of God and not the negative side. But we need to hate and avoid evil.

Proverbs 8:13 "The fear of the LOORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate."

Proverbs 16:6 "In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LOORD one departs from evil."

Obviously, the fear of the Lord is an essential, key factor in living a righteous life and living the way of God.

God commanded many things in the Mosaic Law. However, their manifestation was related to external observances, which if need be, can be enforced. But love and reverence cannot be enforced, even by God Himself. They must be spontaneous and from the heart. So, even under the law of ordinances, where so much was commanded, and God's omnipotence was ready to compel, obedience, love, and reverence, and all that truly fulfills the fear of God, cannot be forced by divine power.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 "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, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

The fear of God is a fundamental quality of those who have an experiential knowledge of whom He is.

God offers us the solution to all our problems for our own good and we decide whether or not to take Him up on it, in a sense. He sets before us life and death, and of course, He wants us to choose life.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 is an appropriate summary of what God requires to genuinely fear Him. It is the essence of the law.

The fear of God is a fundamental quality of those who have an experiential knowledge of who He is. The experience of the sailors in the book of Jonah provides a good illustration of this and of the difference between terror of God and saving fear of God.

When Jonah told the sailors that it was the Lord "who made the sea and land" who had sent the storm upon them, they were terrified (Jonah 1:9-10). But once the storm had subsided, they "greatly feared the Lord" (which was a different kind of fear than the terror they had just seen in Jonah 1:16) in the sense of being filled with awe and reverence, making sacrifices and vows to Him. This was the result of their having a true fear of the Lord.

The significance of the response of sacrifices and vows is that they were born out of some knowledge, however small, of who God is. Proverbs 2:5 equates "the fear of the Lord" with "the knowledge of God". It also hints at something that the biblical passages imply—that the fear of God stems especially from an experience of His transcendence

and divine power.

Proverbs 2:1-6 My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding;

The Lord gives wisdom from His mouth, and knowledge, and understanding. The fear of God produces practical results, as it did with the awe-filled sailors who offered sacrifices. When God gave the law to Israel through Moses, the command to fear the Lord occurred repeatedly, often coupled with the command to obey God's decrees.

The fear of the Lord appeared as a contrast to sinful deeds and has the force of a moral imperative.

Leviticus 25:17 'Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 25:35-36 'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. 'Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you.

That does not necessarily mean that he will live with you in your house, but he will live with you in your community.

Several biblical people are explicitly said to exemplify the fear of God, sometimes confirming its relationship to obedience.

After Abraham had obeyed God's command by showing his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac, an angel of the Lord declared to him:

Genesis 22:12 "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 see there, in a sense, the final sense of fearing God. That is, not withholding anything at all, especially those things which we value, from God.

Joseph, a man of integrity, attempted to allay his brothers' fears with the comment, "I fear God."

In Job 1:8; 2:3, God himself twice described Job as "a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil." Yet as we read earlier, Job still had a problem seeing God for what He really is, otherwise, there would not have been times when Job "cast off fear" temporarily, as we read earlier. Eventually, Job completely understood the fear of God—this is evident in his later comment in Job 42:5: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You."

The Bible also describes people who do not fear God. By the time Moses had brought seven different plagues upon Egypt, Pharaoh knew God well enough to fear Him, but he didn't do so. Though Pharaoh appeared to repent, Moses replied, "I know that you ... still do not fear the Lord God".

Exodus 9:27-30 And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time. The LOORD is righteous, and my people and I are wicked. Entreat the LOORD, that there may be no more mighty thundering and hail, for it is enough. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer." And Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LOORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth is the LOORD's. But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the LOORD God."

I cannot help but think about the upcoming tribulation and how bad things will get for people, but many people will still not fear God. Even after Pharaoh allowed Israel to flee Egypt, his disobedience in giving pursuit indicated that he still did not truly fear God. As a consequence, God destroyed Pharaoh's army, just as He promised to bring judgment upon all those who do not fear Him, while preserving those who do fear Him.

Malachi 3:5 And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me," says the LOORD of hosts.

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Malachi 3:16-18 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. "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

The fear of God is a fundamental quality of people who know and obey God. These encouraging words land on each and every one of us. If we will fear God and all that is entailed in it—in way of reverence, obedience, and serving—then these blessings will be ours and we will be written in the Book.

The fundamental problem with sinful humanity is illustrated in Romans 3. Paul says there is no regard or reverence for the character, authority, and honor of God to restrain the Jews from sin, any more than there is to restrain the Gentiles from sin. Their conduct shows that they are not kept from committing sin since they don't have a proper fear of God. The only thing that is effective in restraining people from sin is a high regard of the honor and law of God.

Romans 3:9-18 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

The fear of God is also a sign of who are His and who are not. The lack of the proper fear of God is manifested in the attitudes of human beings as disobedience to God's law, disrespect of His authority, short-sightedness of His awesome power, and improper worship of Him.

Since we don't always see God punishing us immediately for our sins, we have a strong tendency to disregard our own bad actions and often to sin on. So the longsuffering of

God, which leads to repentance, is abused in a way that leads to further crimes!

Ecclesiastes 8:11-13 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. 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. 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.

We have the choice of eternal life or death, of blessing or cursing, of God's way of life or Satan's way. All these contrasts lead to one core element. The choice, in a nutshell—so to speak—is to fear God or not fear God.

The fear of God is manifested in our attitudes as obedience, reverence, awe, and veneration. If we do fear God there are many resulting blessings. The book of Proverbs lists many of those:

God will bring blessings upon us, He will confide in us, and have mercy upon us.

We will avoid evil, gain life, receive knowledge, and receive wisdom.

The essence of the whole man is summarized in Ecclesiastes 12. To revere God and to obey Him in proper fear is the whole man, and constitutes man's whole being. All other things (as God's Word teaches again and again) are dependent on a higher incomprehensible Being and the fear that we show toward Him.

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: **fear God** and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man [Although it says "whole duty of man" here, the word "duty" is not in the original Hebrew. It actually says, "This is the whole man."] For God will bring every work into judgment, including every

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secret thing, whether good or evil.

There is only one concluding statement to make here: God **will** understand!