

## Finding Real Profits

### Proverbs 8:13

again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

A Hasidic proverb states that there are only two things to fear: Fear God and the man who has no fear of God.

In the 1932 presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt campaigned against Herbert Hoover by saying as little as possible about what he might do if elected. Even his closest associates felt they did not know him well. Perhaps the only one to truly have an understanding of this mysterious man was his wife Eleanor. During his campaign speeches he relied on both his wit and charm to keep people at a distance. As one historian noted “in his campaign speeches, he favored a buoyant, optimistic, gently paternal tone spiced with humor.” Yet the tone of his inaugural address was entirely different with what the historian said had an “unusually solemn, religious quality.” The historian said this was for good reason—by 1933 the depression had reached its depth. Roosevelt’s first inaugural address outlined in broad terms how he hoped to govern and reminded Americans that the nation’s “common difficulties” concerned “only material things.” Here are his opening remarks.

On March 4, 1933 FDR began his speech with these words: “I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our people impel. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will

In the body of his address he discussed a bold plan for Congress to act on measures that would provide stability for a nation in despair. He faced the daunting task of high unemployment and the need to get Americans back to work. He spoke of the failed banking system and the need to regulate not only that industry but how investments were made. He declared a redistribution of the population away from the overcrowding that was occurring in the industrial centers advocating the development of suburban areas.

Throughout the body of his address he wanted to instill confidence not only in him to lead America out of this dismal economic state, but to instill confidence back in the American people who through its inception have always been people who have risen to the challenges it faced with a resolve to work together for solutions. Don’t fear the economy, don’t fear unemployment, don’t fear anything but fear itself.

With that as our opening please turn with me once again to the book of Proverbs where we have been pondering ancient wisdom for modern times. In Sunday school you tackled the entire chapter. For our message I want us to consider just one verse. It too, speaks about fear, fear from a different perspective, a perspective that has an earthly pursuit of godly character with eternal ramifications.

### Proverbs 8:13

Throughout the chapter wisdom is talking. She has introduced herself in the opening verses. She calls out to any and all who will heed her cry. She speaks to travelers on the road of life to follow her guidance and experience outlining benefits for those that follow her. In a word, she is asking them to trust her to lead them along a path of security and integrity. She is calling out to the simple to seek

after her because she can provide for them sound judgment in daily practical matters. She pleads with the foolish to accept her offer so that they will gain understanding that will guide them in making wise choices. She speaks plainly about the benefits for those who follow her and how she has been around since even before time began. When God framed the worlds, wisdom was His guide. We learned in the beginning of our study in Proverbs that **“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”** We cannot fear the Lord without wisdom. We cannot have wisdom without fearing the Lord.

Just why then should we fear the Lord? What does fearing the Lord look like?

## I. FEAR GOD BECAUSE HE IS HOLY

Throughout Scripture God is known by or described as holy. Just over one chapter in **9:10** we see that **“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”**

The dictionary defines holy as spiritually perfect or pure, untainted by evil or sin, sinless.

Looking at it from a Biblical perspective the word means to be set apart in some special or exclusive way.

When we consider that God is holy Unger’s Bible dictionary describes it in this way **“one of the essential attributes of the divine nature...it is, on the one hand, entire freedom from moral evil, and upon the other, absolute moral perfection. Scripture lays great stress on this attribute of God.”**

Theologian Charles Ryrie writes **“holiness in the Bible means separation from all that is common or unclean. In respect to God, holiness means not only that He is separate from all that is unclean and evil**

**but also that He is positively pure and thus distinct from all others. An analogy may help in understanding this concept, he writes. What does it mean to be healthy? It is the absence of illness, but also a positive infusion of energy. Holiness is the absence of evil and the presence of positive right. In God, His holiness is a purity of being and nature as well as of will and act.”** He is by nature pure and through that purity He wills and acts in a way that everything He does is holy. The Bible speaks openly about His holiness.

**Exodus 14:31; 15:11** notice the link between fear and trust

**I Samuel 2:2**

**Psalms 99:9**

**Isaiah 6:3**

**Habakkuk 1:12**

**Revelation 15:4**

He is ever and always without sin. Understand that if God were to have even one sin, however minor it might seem to us or even if He were to sin only once then He would not be holy in character, He would not be able to forgive sin, He could not promise nor guarantee eternal life nor could we trust Him to keep any promise that He has made. He is worthy to be feared because He is holy.

Unger’s continues. **“By the holiness of God, it is not implied that He is subject to some law or standard of moral excellence external to Himself, but that all moral law and perfection have their eternal and unchangeable basis in His own nature. He is the One in whom these eternal sanctities reside, who is Himself the root and ground of them all. In this sense it is said without qualification, ‘There is none holy as the Lord (I Samuel 2:2).’ ‘You alone are holy (Revelation 15:4).’”**

He is not subject to a standard of holiness, He is the standard.

**1. His holiness is the grounds for reverence and praise.**

**Psalm 71:22-23**

**Psalm 111:7-10 (9)**

**Isaiah 6:1-4**

2. His holiness is the standard of life and conduct and it is the standard by which everyone will be judged.

Holiness has become a matter of convenience, when it suits me. TSA agents have been found to be stealing items. They say they do it because they aren't getting paid enough and just don't care.

**I John 1:7** (purify is make holy)

**Romans 3:23; 6:23**

**I Peter 1:15-16**

God is the standard by which we should set our moral compass.

3. His holiness implies divine opposition to and condemnation of all sin.

**"To fear the Lord is to hate evil." Proverbs 8:13**

**Habakkuk 1:13**

**I Samuel 6:20** (Philistines stole ark and returned it)

**Isaiah 6:5**

4. His holiness awakens within us a consciousness of sin that results in true repentance.

**Luke 5:8**

**Isaiah 6:3, 5**

To fear the Lord is to live in righteous obedience because He is holy. **When we fear the Lord, Chuck Swindoll writes that we "set Him apart" in our hearts.** We acknowledge His holiness and desire to obediently follow His commands which includes turning away from sin. Holiness on God's part means that He is without sin. Holiness on our part is to 1) aspire to His standard and 2) receive the righteousness of Christ by faith.

Isaiah's response was the same as that of Peter's. Invited to observe the halls of heaven and the exaltation given to the One seated on the throne by the angelic host, he suddenly realized how

unworthy he was to be in the presence of the Holy One. **It would be like arriving at a formal dinner party for someone of royalty only to realize that you still have on the work clothes you wore in the barn when you were cleaning out stalls.** We suddenly feel entirely out of place.

5. His holiness is revealed to us and is what we are to aspire to. The standard of His holiness has

been revealed through the written Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit who convicts and corrects.

**II Timothy 3:16-17 "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (holiness). That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished (equipped) unto every good work."**

**I Peter 1:15-16**

**I John 3:2-3**

**Leviticus 20:7-8**

**Hebrews 12:14-15, 28**

We are to fear God because He is holy. Fear is not in the sense of cowering before Him afraid of what He can or will do. Fear as used by the writer in **Proverbs 8:13** means to fall down in worship of Him. It is an awe of who He is. Like the angels and 4 living creatures and the 24 elders, we too will bow before Him in humility, acknowledge His holiness, worship Him, and aspire to live holy.

Without His holiness imputed to us through or by the finished work of Christ on the cross and our repentance of sin acknowledging our own inability to meet His holy standard and then by faith believing that Christ's shed blood is sufficient to pay the debt of my sin we will not see the Lord. If that is my spiritual condition then I really should be afraid of the Lord. It will not be a reverential awe, but a fear of what He will do in punishment for my rejection of His gift of salvation offered by grace.

When I drive by a police car sitting in the median of the highway I have nothing to fear when I am doing the speed limit, but I have everything to fear if I am breaking the law.

We are to reverence Him because He is holy. As part of His holy nature, He hates evil. He has a holy hatred for it. If we are to rightly fear the Lord then we too will have a holy hatred for sin.

There are many in this nation who have no sense of the holiness of God so they do not fear Him, they do not reverence Him. Consequently they do what they want. Warren Wiersbe writes “Fearing the Lord is opposite of tempting the Lord by deliberately disobeying Him and then daring Him to intervene.” People think that if they willfully sin and God does nothing about it then either God does not exist or God does not care.

At stake in this upcoming election is more than just unemployment or healthcare or foreign policy concerns or immigration. There are greater issues related to holiness with issues like the murder of babies through abortion, the marriage of same sex couples, the legalization of prostitution and more gambling. At stake is the promotion and practice of sin a blatant and defiant lack of fearing the Lord. We the church do not hate sin enough. Hate is a strong word. We would rather be more tolerant. We would rather say we don’t like sin. If we fear the Lord because He is holy then we will hate evil.

Without understanding the true nature of God’s holiness, we will continue to give way to our own sinful desires and never have the reverence for Him that He should receive.

If God is holy, and we say we follow Him then we are to separate ourselves from those things that categorically would be construed as being unholy. As Solomon sees it, that is real wisdom. The command for us to hate evil is also found in

**Romans 12:9.** It says we are to abhor, loathe or be disgusted by it so that we get nauseous from it. Someone has said that to the degree we fear the Lord will be the degree to which we hate evil. We are to fear God because he is holy. We know of His holiness through the Bible and we cannot know about His standard of holiness if we do not read it.

Warren Wiersbe has said that “We study the Word of God so that we might better know the God of the Word.”

A.W. Tozer wrote “It is impossible to keep our moral practice sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate. If we would bring back spiritual power to our lives, we must begin to think of God more nearly as He is.” Scripture reminds us clearly that “He is holy” and therefore because He is holy we are to fear Him and in our character be holy, too. Fear the Lord because He is holy.

## II. FEAR GOD BECAUSE HE IS SOVEREIGN

When we speak of the sovereignty we speak of someone who is above or superior to others by rank or status or position. He is a ruler and has authority over others.

When we speak of the sovereignty of God we are speaking about a term that expresses His supreme rule over everything: nature, nations, individuals including health, and even weather.

**Proverbs 8:15-16**

**Proverbs 16:4**

**Proverbs 19:21**

**Daniel 4:2-3, 17, 34-35**

**Colossians 1:16-17**

Sovereignty first speaks about His position, that He is the chief or greatest Being in the universe. Secondly, it speaks about His power, that He is the greatest power in the universe. Some who are

sovereign are dictators of which God is not. Others who are sovereign abdicate the use of their powers of which God does not. **Ryrie again notes that “Ultimately God is in complete control of all things, though He may choose to let certain events happen according to natural laws that He has ordained.”**

Some view this as God being either incompetent and therefore incapable of ordering or controlling events or that God is uncaring and therefore aloof to events just sits in another corner of the universe watching the world’s events unfold from a distance choosing instead not to interfere.

**Ryrie – “God has a plan (Acts 15:18), which is all-inclusive (Ephesians 1:11), which He controls (Psalm 135:6), which includes but does not involve Him in evil (Proverbs 16:4), and which ultimately is for the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:14).”**

Like His holiness, if God is not in control of even one thing, then He cannot be in control any of it. Just because there is evil in the world or because there is sickness in the world does not mean He is not in control. Everything ultimately works out for good to those who love Him and for His purpose.

**There are those like William Henley who wrote “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.”** Regrettably they will find out that God is the one who is in control of it all, even them.

Without compromising man’s freewill, God is able to bring about His plan for every individual according to His sovereign work. Now let me say here that this in no way negates our responsibility. It was God who brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt, but they still had to get up and walk out. It was God who parted the Red Sea for them to avoid the anger of the Egyptian army, but they still had to walk through. It was God who gave them the land of Canaan as an inheritance, but they still had to fight for it. God is able to bring about His

sovereign plan through the free will of man. It was God performed the miracle of redemption but man must act by faith.

With such power to control all things we should again think carefully and act accordingly in fearing the Lord. We can think that we are in control of our own destiny, the captain of our soul, we can even sing along with Frank Sinatra that *I Did It My Way*, but in the end we will realize that God is sovereign. He sets up rulers and takes down rulers. He elevates some kingdoms and dismantles others. He allows some who are evil to rise while those who are righteous it may appear that they fall, but ultimately it His for His glory. He controls it.

God is to be feared because He is holy. That should motivate us to desire to be holy as well.

God is to be feared because He is sovereign. That should motivate us to trust Him because He has a perfect plan and will for us. His holiness and sovereignty balance each other. If He was not holy His sovereign acts would only be for His selfish end. If He was not sovereign, His holiness could not bring us to redemption.

I want to close with a story about a man who gets what it takes to fear the Lord and hate evil. I’ve never met the man. I don’t even know his name. I do know that he is an evangelical pastor serving in a Middle Eastern country somewhere. He fears and loves the Lord so much that he boldly and publicly proclaims Jesus Christ to the people of his nation. Such activity poses a great risk to him physically. We cannot put a price on the Gospel but reportedly there is a \$65 million bounty on his head by his enemies in order to silence him from preaching the Gospel. He fears the Lord and obeys Him. Like Peter and John He obeys God.

**Chuck Bentley in his book *The Root of Riches* writes “Economists like to consider something called the ‘opportunity cost’ of any investment. It’s**



the potential return we give up in order to invest somewhere else.”

We have a game at home that David likes to play. It's called Payday. As you roll the dice you may land on a square called “Deal” in which you draw a card from a pile. You have the choice whether or not to purchase the business or piece of property on the card for a certain amount of money. It's a risk because in order to get a return for your investment you need to land on another square called “Buyer Found.” If you finish the game with deals in your hand you have lost money. At times you have to make a decision about whether or not to buy that property because you don't want to get stuck with it. You may also choose not to buy it hoping something better will come along later.

We have been presented with an opportunity of a lifetime – to fear the Lord. We show how much we fear Him by how much we hate evil. Satan comes along and wants to distract us from that opportunity by offering us other things that look almost as appealing. He wants to distract from the real riches that God offers through fearing Him. You may think that what Satan is offering is a real deal and can lead you to fearing God, but they are just distractions. In His letter to Laodicea, Jesus speaks of their lukewarmness and how much He hates that condition in Christians. He then invites them to be overcomers, in a sense those who fear God. If we are going to fear God, we must hate evil and every evil way. Lukewarmness is a sin that mitigates our ability to fear the Lord as we should. It compromises our devotion and determination to follow Him and instead takes a lackadaisical approach to spirituality.

In this condition we become satisfied with where we are in our Christian life with little desire to grow any more. We begin to tolerate things God says we should hate. If we fear the Lord then we will hate evil just as He does. Our verse suggests that those

things include both attitudes and actions, “**pride, arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.**” Instead of exalting self we will exalt the Lord. Instead of pride we will be humble. Instead of sinful behavior we will walk with integrity and godly character. Rather than having critical or condescending speech, we will speak what builds up and encourages others.

Where is your heart today? Have you allowed the things of the world to press you into its mold and so lost the edge of fearing the Lord? His holiness and sovereignty should compel us to reverence Him. The wise person will fear the Lord.