

Monday, 19 March 2018 Genesis 3:7-11

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

"I was afraid" What a damning statement. One the first things to notice is that Adam never answered God's question about the source of the question. "Who told you that you were naked?" has to be the first rhetorical question ever asked. God knew the answer and wanted Adam to admit he knew. Adam knew he had sinned, but blamed someone else for his bad decision. Haven't learned, have we?

The Hebrew word, "yare" has a broad and rich range of synonyms; from reverence to dread. Why did the translators of the KJV and following translations choose afraid as the appropriate translation? I suspect, that as I dig my way through this study, I will find that the translation is appropriate because to be afraid of God is to finally and fully recognize the awesomeness and demands of His holiness. I cannot approach the LORD, God the Almighty in my sin-stained state. His holiness demands absolute, abject terror in me unless I am covered by His grace and mercy.

Tuesday, 20 March 2018 Genesis 9:1-2

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.

Sometimes English, in spite of having a wealth of words, lacks one with the proper nuance. We need different words to describe fear as in the fear of the Lord and fear as in the fear of rattlesnakes. But I wonder if fear in this passage is not analogous to the fear of the Lord. Could it be a reflection of the *imago Dei* in man? Does my dog, with an extremely limited moral/ethical foundation, regard me as a god? Am I carrying this simile too far?

Wednesday, 21 March 2018 Genesis 14:21-24, 15:1

And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' I will take nothing but what the young

men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share." After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

An implication here is that Abram is not to worry, the LORD will provide. Specifically, because He is the consummate shield and He will reward Abram's faith.

Abram might have been thinking in terms of sheep, donkeys, and camels, but the LORD was focused on the nation of Israel, His people, the descendants of Abraham who would outnumber the stars in the sky.

Thursday, 22 March 2018 Genesis 15:12 (KJV)

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

Recent translations, i.e. ESV, NIV, NLT, use dreadful/terrifying and great darkness instead of horror of great darkness. The modern translation does not convey the thingness of despicable evil that seems to be contained in the Hebrew. If I am right, the LORD is giving Abram a vision of the horror of great darkness that he is being protected from.

Has the captivity in Egypt, the exile to Babylon, the pogroms, the Holocaust, be attempts by that horror to break through the shield?

Friday, 23 March 2018 Genesis 18:12-15

So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

Another case, see Monday's comments, where the Hebrew is translated as afraid, and that does not carry the sense of the richness of the original. This was not an "I'm afraid of catching a cold" but is a sense of reverence and awe; an awareness that I doubt the ability of the LORD, God the Almighty.

How often does my lack of faith seem to be laughing at God?

Saturday, 24 March 2018 Genesis 20:9-11

Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done." And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see, that you did this thing?" Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, 'There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'

Abraham's problem in a nutshell? He was far more willing to be

frightened by an unGodly society than to fear the LORD. In this case, unwilling to trust the LORD's promise that his descendants would be through Sarah. Later, he proved that he had not learned the lesson by committing the same sin in Egypt.

I have no right to assume a holier than thou attitude. Unwillingness to trust in the promises of the LORD, God, the Almighty is scattered throughout my life.

Lord's Day, 25 March 2018 Psalm 119:49-56

Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life. The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law. When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law. Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law. This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts.

Lord, it is hot indignation and sorrow for those who not only forsake Your law but deny its power. The blessing of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is the birthright of all who claim loyalty to You but denied by those who reject Your grace. How can the message reach them as it reached Ben yesterday? There was no preaching, no alter call, just a group of men discussing what it meant to live in Your Kingdom. And suddenly, a lost lamb was crying at the sheepfold gate. Praise You, our Lord and Master, one lamb, entered the fold.

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VOICES TOGETHER

Daily Meditations from the Scriptures



March 19-25, 2018

Prayer of the week, based on Paul's prayer in: Colossians 1:3-8

We always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

LORD, thank You for the {congregation} and the calling you have given to us to be beacons of hope through the word of truth. Continue to use us so that the Gospel will bear fruit throughout the world. We pray for each of our brothers and sisters who serve You in hostile environments, whether in foreign lands or in the secular culture around us.

We pray for our leaders and shepherds, the ones who have been so faithful in encouraging us to understand Your grace in all its truth and to carry that understanding into our Personal Mission Fields. Continue to provide for them and their families. *Amen*

To fear or not to fear, that is the question.

The fear of the Lord, an expression that occurs many times in Scripture, 142 in the ESV in various forms, is not well understood in the Church today. For many, the phrase represents a weak and flabby description of an overly saccharine spiritual being of some sort. It certainly does not include the concept of the LORD, God the Almighty who spoke all things into being and who controls all things.

Join with me in examining the fear of the LORD and seeking an understanding of life in the Kingdom of Heaven in the here and now as guided by that fear.