

Monday, 4 June 2018 Judges 7:9-11

That same night the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp.

Do I ever doubt that I have properly heard the Spirit guiding me into an action? Am I really hearing the guidance of the Spirit or am I chasing another of John's will-o-wisps?

Yes! Frequently! Does the Spirit often send confirmation or a corrective direction? Yes! Frequently! Yesterday is a case in point for that meditation was written on April 23, 2008, selected only because it was the next unpublished meditation on Psalm 119. I believe that was confirmation that my musings on the meaning of the fear of the Lord are in obedience to His directions.

Tuesday, 5 June 2018 1 Samuel 4:2-3, 10

The Philistines drew up in line against Israel, and when the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the field of battle. And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies."...So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell.

What happened here? Wasn't it the failure of the Israelites to fear the LORD, God, the Almighty and place their trust in a symbol of Him? The very presence of the Ark would defeat the Philistines. Surprise!

Do I put my trust in symbols or orthopraxy (correct rituals, liturgies, and practices)? Don't I need to be constantly examining the robustness of my fear of the LORD, God the Almighty?

Wednesday, 6 June 2018 1 Samuel 7:7-10

Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the people of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines." So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole

burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel.

This is an interesting progression for the Israelites began by being afraid of the Philistines but responded in fear of the LORD. They called on Samuel to intercede for them, he did and the LORD acted. It is an example of trust in action.

How often do I face a modern day horde of Philistines and am afraid? I must constantly remind myself to trust in Him, to come before Him in worship and leave the situation in His hands.

Thursday, 7 June 2018 1 Samuel 11:6-7

And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of the messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.

This is a different word in Hebrew that is more accurately translated as dread or alarm than the word translated in the phrase, "the fear of the LORD." It lacks the sense of reverence or awe. Israel was not responding in reverence, they were scared of the LORD's fury as had been exhibited by Saul. Was Saul wrong to respond in anger? Probably! We see in other passages that he was an impetuous and easily angered individual.

The lesson to me is that I need to keep the end goal in sight; that is to lead those I shepherd into the fear of the LORD, God the Almighty. That may require leading them through dread of the consequences of their sin. Also, that my teaching must not blithely skip over the understanding of the stench that sin brings to the party.

Friday, 8 June 2018 1 Samuel 12:13-14

And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you. If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well.

Samuel is laying out very clearly that even though Israel has rejected the kingship of the LORD, God, the Almighty, that, if they and the king continue to fear the LORD in every aspect of their lives, He will continue to bless them.

Isn't this a foreshadowing of the ongoing grace and mercy of the LORD, God, the Almighty displayed through the sacrifice of the Son of God? I am restored to communion with Him, after repenting of sin. He does not withdraw His forgiveness by my ongoing waywardness, but He can sure display his displeasure. Standby for more on this point tomorrow.

Saturday, 9 June 2018 1 Samuel 12:15-18

But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king. Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for yourselves a king." So Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

Sometime, like the Israelites, I need a taste of the LORD's displeasure because of my rebellion. He wiped out the wheat harvest in minutes, a very serious blow to the food supply. Sometimes, it might be a comparatively minor slap on the hand, but it can be something that is a serious impediment to my freedom or my health. I've limped for about 50 years due to an incident of drunken stupidity. No need to go into details or other examples.

Lord's Day, 10 June 2018 Psalm 119:3

who also do no wrong, but walk in His ways!

Lord, what is it to seek You with my whole heart? It is more than the mechanics of Scripture reading, meditation, prayer, doing good deeds; it is coming to You with a humble and contrite heart; it is coming to You in submission and a willingness to put every aspect of my life in Your hands; it is trusting You in all things. It is the recognition, no, the acceptance that You are before all things, not only in time but in authority, and that in You, all things are held together. You are my Lord and Master.

VOICES TOGETHER

Daily Meditations from the Scriptures



June 4-10, 2018

Prayer of the week, based on Paul's prayer in: 2 Thessalonians 3:2-5

And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

Lord, we pray for our [Congregation], that we may be wise and discerning. There are many who among those we are called to minister to, who profess the faith but do not walk it when out in the world. Guide us as we seek to lead our flocks into lives that honor and glorify You in all aspects.

We pray for each other that we will be led into the fullness of Your love and filled with Your perseverance. 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.

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