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The Fear of the Lord

I'm not sure how much this ties in with what I am going to share today, but I read a verse recently, one I'm sure most in our fellowship is familiar with, but it seemed to startle me in a new way. It really just made me stop in my tracks and think about it. The verse is in Exodus chapter 14. It's verse 13 and it reads:

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

And it hit me, for some reason I thought that if that was the only verse in the Bible, or if somehow that was the only verse from the Bible that I was privy to hear...that that very verse could sum up this Salvation, this work that the Lord has done. Again, keeping in mind that this Old Testament reference was a hollow projection of the full substance of Salvation that was coming in and as Christ.

Anyway, I just really saw the broad spectrum, the big picture, I guess you could say, of Salvation. I'm not trying to toot a spiritual horn or anything here, I mean, what I saw was no doubt a drop in the bucket of Truth, but I guess it just hit me in a big way. There seems to be so much of the Purpose of God wrapped up right there in that one verse.

I'm sure just having read it some of you are sitting there now thinking about some of the same things I was when I read it. But, let's kind of look at it in chunks here. First of all, I love how Moses' first direction to the Israelites is "fear not". Do not be uncertain, per say. Because, keep in mind, this is right before they cross the red sea. They have the Egyptians breathing down their neck and they are coming upon the waters of the red sea. I'm guessing that at this point, most of them are actually "fearing" and not so much on the "fear not" part. As Brett referenced this story a couple of weeks ago, we can assume that they must have been VERY uncertain with the potential outcome of this predicament. But, nevertheless, Moses says: Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you today. So, I'm gonna go out on a limb here and say that Moses probably has not been practicing up on his yoga breathing... and that that was not the reason he was able to keep himself composed in such a seemingly highly stressful situation such as this. I don't think he was standing there telling himself that everything was going to be OK a thousand times and breathing in and out slowly and methodically... He didn't have to try to convince himself of anything...I believe that Moses had seen by God-given revelation that there is in fact nothing to fear here because Salvation is at hand. He had seen a glimpse of this reality by the view of God and knew that there was going to be nothing natural that would stand in it's way. Nothing really at all for that matter. He was telling the camp of Israel that if they could but, stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord...that, it is Today. Today, right now in this light, you will see the Lord's victory, prosperity and deliverance. Because that reality already exists in the Lord's heart. He saw it before He even began creating the world. It was even His blueprint for the world, you could say. He created everything that has been created with the framework of Salvation in His mind.

But, here is unfortunately an opportune time for us to misunderstand the Lord's goodness in this situation. This situation of escaping the Egyptians and crossing the red sea. As it was for the Israelites as well. At the surface, we can commend the Lord and thank Him for His "salvation" of letting us (Israel) get away from the bad guys (Egypt). Kind of a "thanks, Lord for letting us give them the slip". That was a close one. We tend to value the work of Lord based on the thing or things or situation that He delivers us out from when, in the grand reality, the things He has delivered us from is bondage. Not things and situations. But, the bondage of self. And then we fail to move on to see what He has delivered us into: freedom of Life. He has actually delivered us from one man, into Another (capital A). Out from self, into HIMself. Egypt was a type, a picture of this bondage...but, more so, a picture of the bondage of flesh. Our own personal flesh. Israel saw the waters come crashing down on the heads of many Egyptians that night (I think it was nighttime) and probably cheered in joyous jubilee that their pursuers were no longer going to be a problem. Totally overlooking the promise of life, all they could see was that death wasn't an impending threat at the time. The threat had been eliminated. Things were good, at least for now. But, that didn't last long. We all know what happens soon enough...all the grumbling in the wilderness and what not...

But, it's just so "natural" for us to view the cutting away of flesh, the losing of something bad, dirty and nasty as the measure of Salvation. It's easy to see and we can get a hold of the fact that a tangible thing has been cut away. We can literally see it, see the difference or the change, and therefore it seems more real to us. We can see the Egyptians that have perished in the waves and say "look at what God has done for us!" As a matter of fact, the Lord even tells us that "today, we will see them (Egyptians) no longer, forever." I'm not saying it is a bad thing to acknowledge the thing that has died, that is definitely a good and wonderful thing. Just as it states in Exodus here, "today you will see them no longer, forever". Bondage is done, it's finished. We will never see it again. And for us now, spiritually speaking, flesh no longer has dominion. That was true for the Israelites and that is definitely true for us, in Christ. God certainly doesn't see it anymore. Why do we think Christ yelled from the cross that, it is finished? Because in the Lord's perspective, it was and IS! And that very picture is here in Exodus. That water of the red sea baptized. It took everything that represented flesh and bondage, doused it under the water as death, and then the freedom of Life, was raised up out of the water.

Anyway, what I'm trying to say is that, though it is incredibly real and usually more easy for us to see the things that have perished in us and the things that we have been delivered from as a result of Salvation, there is an even more clear, pristine, pure reality of Life that is waiting on the other side of the red sea to show us what we have entered into. We have entered into this Salvation and it is ready to be revealed (1 Pet. 1:5). And just b/c we don't see it at times, doesn't make it any less real. Recently, Daniel Brown (from Arkansas) wrote an article that was published in the e-Magazine that Rabon sends out, Contrast. This is how he opened his article: Let me start by saying seeing our lack of Christ, is not the same as seeing Christ. Though I think it can be helpful to address my own misconceptions because they are common, it is NOT the viewing of Christ. It is only the viewing of Christ Himself that transforms...

So, I don't know if that was helpful for anyone or not. I would definitely recommend going back and reading that entire section of scripture where they forge the red sea, but particularly Exodus 14 v. 13. Read and reread it and I hope that it stirs in you the way it has in me recently.

So, that was kind of an introduction I guess. I was planning on maybe talking more about

the fear of the Lord today. What started a few weeks ago for me as wanting to re-read through the Gospel of John, ended up taking me back into proverbs and then through the O.T. as I started seeing a little bit deeper of a reality behind the "fear of the Lord". I literally started reading John, got through the first verse or two and then was lead back to Proverbs 8, which kind of kicked this whole fear of the Lord thing off. I'm not going to read it, but if you guys get a chance, go back and read Proverbs 8, it is really juicy. A lot of cool reference about the reality of Christ being forever and always in the Father's heart, even since before the beginning. And then, just the promise of that reality being made wholly available to those that love Him. And, those that seek Him earnestly, will find Him...but, I got to verse 13 (in proverbs 8) and was kind of stumped a bit by how it read...I will read that verse for you guys:

Pro 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Sorry, that is the KJV. Not sure if you all are familiar with the word "froward"...I know I use it in a sentence at least once a day...but, it means perverse, or fraudulent. So, perverse mouth, or fraudulent mouth do I hate. But anyway, I read that verse and had to sit there and scratch my head for a minute. I've never really thought about the fear of the Lord in that way before. In the way of hating evil, pride, arrogancy, etc. I mean, it made me ponder whether I really even saw what the fear of the Lord truly is. The way it was referenced here in Proverbs 8 was just kind of, unexpected I guess. It seemed sort of unconventional...

So, anyway, I really appreciated what Meghan had to say a couple of weeks ago about the fear of the Lord. Particularly her confession about being an "unfocused" driver. I have done my best for the past 2 weeks to avoid her on the road at any cost. So, Meg, thanks for the heads up.

No really, that was a good analogy. I guess I should try to reiterate it briefly in case there are some folks listening who didn't hear it, or don't remember exactly. Well, to start Meghan confessed that she doesn't exactly pay attention to the road all the time when she's driving. I for one, was SHOCKED when I heard this! (love you Meg). But, she was just saying that driving sort of becomes this subconscious, natural act thing that we do during our day to day lives and that it can become very easy to have our attention focused from the task at hand, the road, over to a million different interesting distractions along the way. And that that in itself can seem somewhat harmless, but the fact that our attention is drawn from the road or the path that we're on and over to some thing, some distraction off to the side, makes for a recipe with potentially disastrous consequences. Our focus, our attention must remain on the road for the safest and best possible results.

It's so true that the best way for us to remain safely on the path of spiritual revelation and as Meghan put it, safe on the road to ourselves and others, our gaze must remained fixed on the road. Our view has to be stationed where the action is, or there can be catastrophic consequences. Deathly consequences. And that is so true in the Lord. If our gaze slips from the road of Life, the consequence is only always death. And as I was thinking more about the analogy, the more I was seeing that that is not only dangerous for us, personally, but also for all of the other drivers, or believers, if you will. When our own personal gaze slips, we ourselves are in danger, but we have also put the rest of the body in danger. Because we operate as one unit, with Christ being the head, we of course, as scripture says, are being formed together for the building up of the body. So, the flip side of that would be, if we aren't seeing Christ, essentially, the body is not being "built up", but, torn down. I'm not saying we are responsible for everyone else's well-being in the Lord, but our own personal revelation of Christ, does absolutely have an affect that can either build the body up, or tear

it down.

So, it was definitely good, for me at least, to hear what Meghan was sharing about the fear of the Lord. I hope I don't repeat too much of what was said. I too have been thinking that fear is commonly associated with or becomes a reality or an issue when there is an "unknown" factor. This is something that Meghan mentioned. We love to be in control. We love to know what to expect. As humans, it is in our nature to receive information, analyze and interpret that information and then spit out some sort of planned or sometimes, unplanned response. This whole process can occur over hours, days or weeks, and sometimes it can occur in a split second. But, either way, we are generally capable of assessing, taking all factors into consideration and then implementing a response. And the more information or facts we have, the better our outcome is usually. It's when those "unknown" or unforeseen factors slip in that tends to throw a wrench in our operation. And it's these "unknowns" that make us uneasy and unsure about ourselves and our capabilities. And that usually produces fear. Fear in the sense of not being able to achieve our desired outcome. A fear of not getting what we want.

But, sometimes fear is more intense than that. I mean, sometimes fear isn't just the possibility of failing, or not getting what you want, but it is actually being "afraid". To be afraid of something like snakes, the dark, or in Meghan's case, roadkill... and in my case, it's our daughter Soraya in about 10 years...

But again, in either case, it's like Meg was saying, it's a fear of the unknown. We don't know what to expect. If we don't know what to expect, we can't really be in control. And that makes us uneasy, we don't like that.

But, if we look at these definitions and scenarios of fear, as it pertains to the Lord, none of them really make sense. Not by these most natural definitions of fear anyway. I mean, there are countless verses in the Old Testament that read very plainly that we are to "fear the Lord" and also, the reality of the "fear OF the Lord"...I know they sound a little different grammatically, but I'm not sure that there is much of a difference between the statements, spiritually or inwardly anyway. And I have seen with no uncertainty that as His creation, we are not to "fear" Him in the way that we typically fear something. That is by, living in a manner that makes us afraid of what the Lord will or will not do if we are insubordinate. The fact of the matter is, if WE are living, we are insubordinate. We are falling short. We are not measuring up. I am well aware of all of the destruction that is laid out at the hands of God in the O.T. upon cities and lands and people that were seemingly insubordinate. But, I think the bigger picture in those stories is NOT that the Lord was just trying to exercise His power, or punish a sinful sect, but, I think the Lord was displaying His unwavering acceptance. Those cities, lands and people were destroyed as a picture of the Lord's righteous judgment. Where one type is rejected and must be put to death and another is accepted and will rise up as such. This was the fear of the Lord at work.

So, to fear the Lord, or to have the fear of the Lord working in you, or as it states in Acts: to be walking in the fear of the Lord, has more to do with having the discerning mind of God fully at work in you than it does being afraid of living up to God's standard. I'll say that again, the fear of the Lord, has more to do with having the discerning mind of God at work in you than it does being afraid of living up to God's standard. What I mean by that is, by having the mind of the lord at work in you, you are seeing ALL things via His discernment. Via, His standard. I mean, let's face it, His standard is Christ. He has made that abundantly clear. ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. ALL. But, there is One, ONE in whom God is well pleased, and that is the Son. And He is all and in all. So, essentially, to be operating in the fear of the Lord, is to be living by the mind of Christ. And this the faith by

which we see and experience all things spiritual.

By walking in the fear of the Lord, we are seeing what is accepted and what is rejected. What is wisdom and what is folly, What is Life and what is death. His judgment is at work. Constantly severing and separating everything it comes up against. On one side is left all that has fallen short of the glory, on the other side of that judgment is His full and perfect Christ. And this really is the fear of the Lord at work. Or again, as it is stated in Acts, this is "walking in the fear of the Lord". This is walking in His view, in His mindset. As Meghan put it, this is the way after God's heart, this is being obedient to faith. Having the fear of the Lord at work in us, is to be living out from His discerning and commanding character. And this always leads to wisdom, knowledge, understanding. If you were to do a word search on "fear" or "the fear of the Lord", in the Old Testament, most often times somewhere in the verses that will pop up, there will also be references to judgment, wisdom, knowledge or understanding. Or you will see the fear of Lord contrasted with evil and wrong doing. I'm going to read several verses here that will hopefully help paint the picture of what I am trying to share. Verses:

Job 28:28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Psalm 19:9 - The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

Pro 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Pro 1:29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: ...they hated knowledge...so, by doing that they have rejected (or did not choose) the fear of the Lord

Pro 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

Isa 2:10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

Isa 11:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;

This is a really cool one. It is actually just a snippet out of the verse and the full context won't be evident in the portion I read, but it is:

1Sa 11:7 And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

You can just see the discerning nature of the mind of the Lord in this verse. How He accepts only One. And because He only accepts One, only One will be revealed. And because only One will be revealed, there should be only One consent among believers. I say should be only one consent among believers, because we all know that there are unfortunately many minds and interpretations alive in the "church" today, that simply cannot "consent" to the oneness of Christ. I mean, we put His name on our Church signs, in our songs and what not, but there are still so many little sideworkings that we cannot manage to "consent" on. If we truly saw the oneness of Christ, there would not exist those little sideworkings...

Acts 9:31

There is just such an enormous darkness and misunderstanding when it comes to fearing the Lord, or the fear of the Lord. It just makes me think, how many times have we heard people say "That'll put the fear of God in ya"...or something along those lines. I think if we really saw the fear of God as it really is: the mind that segregates Good from evil, Righteousness from rags, Truth from the lie, Life from death, we would be begging to have that fear of God in us. The fear of God isn't a threat. At least not to anything of worth or value. It does in fact threaten the flesh and all that falls short of the glory of God, but in the Light of Life, we find no worth in that flesh.

And it doesn't just set all of those things (good, evil, truth, lie, life, death) into separate categories and make one more believable than the other, or make one more shiny and desirable than the other, while it does do that, the fear of the Lord actually is at work in the believer to bring an increase of Christ. To unveil His mind and His purpose as He Himself knows it! To be walking in the fear of the Lord is to be walking by faith. Faith being the absolute and discerning mind of Christ Jesus. I hope that's not opaque or confusing.

So, I guess it's true that to us, the Lord is kind of like an unknown factor. Outside of the Light, outside of revelation, we don't know Him. So, I guess in a sense we are somewhat afraid of the Lord. Afraid b/c we don't know what to expect. We can't really anticipate what knowing the Lord is going to be like, or look like. But, the good news is, we are, coming to know Him. We must learn Him. It is the Father's good pleasure to reveal the Son. Like in Joshua, when they were about to cross the Jordan...we have never passed this way before. But, now we have the true ark of the covenant in view. We are utterly dependent on Him and He is in fact leading us by His revelation.