

Why Fearing the Lord is the Only Possible Way to Personal Peace

"I AM the door. If anyone enters by me [they] will be saved." – Jesus (John 10:9)

As long as we have a conscience, we must face the conviction of our guilt when we either do or think things we know are wrong. As painful as a bad conscience is, however, it is just as dangerous to wish away our capacity to feel *remorse* from guilt as it would be to evade every experience of *physical* pain. The biggest danger, for example, of the disease of leprosy is not decaying flesh, but instead our inability to feel a sore on the sole of our foot (being out of sight) so that we aren't aware it is festering. Both types of pain can become so intolerable that one must either mend its cause or deaden our pain. The dulling of our consciences can be achieved (though only temporarily) either by abusing drugs or alcohol, or by other pastimes which, though completely harmless in themselves, tend to push God away from being the rightful healer and fulfiller of our lives (Isaiah 53:5).

The concept of "*the fear of the Lord*" (Proverbs 1:7) is easily misunderstood and consequently also very easily abused. I have had numerous conversations in which the other person decried being on the "wrong side" of an application of "*the fear of the Lord*" which devastatingly resulted in their turning away from God instead. Sadly, if one "cherry-picks" which Bible passages to employ and which to ignore in assembling their message, it is possible to **distort** the above Proverbs' passage by overemphasizing either God's Law (Exodus 19:12b) or His good news (Romans 5:8) exclusively. The clear view of the Bible as a whole is that God's character is described as holy-love. God is indeed **both** holy and love at the same time. He is firstly **holy** in that He is utterly righteous in his character and consequently expects us to be holy as well (Leviticus 19:2). Secondly, God is merciful and **loving** in that He desires all sinners to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) and live in a joyous relationship with Him (Romans 5:1-7). God's holiness led Him to deal with our sins by bearing them (through His Son Jesus) on the cross precisely because "*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins*" (Hebrews 9:22b). At the same time it is God's love which led Him to freely give Jesus up for us all (John 3:16, Romans 5:8: 8:32, 1 John 4:10).

I cannot tell you then that God's holiness is now out the window. But what I can instead declare is that our holy God has provided the means by which any and all people can with **assurance** come to Him through the way that Jesus provided when He said, "I AM the door" (title, above). Since God provided that means for our being in relationship with Him both in the present and for eternity, then ignoring this was (which is *His* way) exhibits the opposite of properly fearing the Lord. Stated another way, fearing the Lord in the biblical sense says, "*I won't be so presumptuous as to risk standing before God's holiness in my very own 'righteousness'* which is in reality is just '*filthy rags*' (Isaiah 64:6) *but will instead gladly enter through the very door where His invitation is firmly offered* (Romans 5:1f, Hebrews 10:19-20)." You have heard me acknowledge before, the time that I got caught trying to sneak into the county fair as a teenager when I already had plenty of money to get my own ticket (notice John 10:1). That was foolish!

Since God has paid the highest entrance price ever, by the giving of His only begotten Son as our substitute through His death on the cross and resurrection, why dare we ignore His way by devising our own designs instead (Hebrews 12:25)? Since the season of Lent 2021 is now upon us, let us rather relish these weeks that lead up to Easter. Its message is an invitation to life for every person. Let us then truly **fear NOT God**, but rather avoid the **wages** of our **sins** (Romans 6:23) by relishing in the life, death, and resurrection of God's very own Son, Jesus Christ. At bottom the Triune God is love for each of you.