

Words of Encouragement: The Fear of the Lord

Ephesians 1 is an awesome, inspiring look at the work of God in human history. This work was planned before time began and it culminates not in an event, but with a man, Jesus Christ, seated upon the glorious heavenly throne.

Men and women throughout church history have marveled (and trembled!) at this reminder of God's grace, his sovereignty, and the supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ. Tender hearts through the ages have echoed Paul's cry that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened (Eph 1:18)—that their true spiritual discernment and perception of God would be sharpened. Rightly so. There is nothing so important in this life or the one to come as our knowledge of God.

In all the known universe and beyond, in the physical realm and the realm of the angels and demons, whether in the past, present or future, there is only one thing constant, ever-living and unchanging—and that is God himself. In our day, some people wonder whether there are absolutes in some abstract or philosophical sense. The life-transforming truth is that there *is* an absolute and it is not a truth or an 'ism' but it is a person. An all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, completely holy, triune GOD. This is the God of whom Scripture testifies.

Ultimately, all of our creeds, laws, principles, and practices must find their root in the nature of God himself—or they have no root at all. When Moses spoke to Israel, the basis of the commandments was made evident: “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.” (Lev 19:2) Notice that the issue isn't being holy because it is good, or noble, or right. It is being holy because that is the nature of God. The law has its root in the very nature of God.

When we really understand this truth it will likely cause us to tremble before God. This is a Biblical sentiment called “the fear of the Lord,” and we could all use more of it. When we realize we've not been bending some arbitrary rule like the speed limit, but we've been actively opposing the very nature of God, we do well to tremble. No one can successfully oppose God forever.

However, there can also be an incredible sense of peace that comes from this understanding. Truth is not arbitrary. Right and wrong is not arbitrary. Social forces may change, popular ideas may change, rulers may come and go, but God remains. And as he remains unchanging, so do his word, his purposes, his promises, his laws, his decrees, and his grace. There is incredible security in that truth.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that God will once again shake everything that can be shaken, so that only that which cannot be shaken may remain (12:26-27). We might observe quite simply that it is those things that are rooted in God himself that will not be shaken. Is our world crumbling around us? If it seems so then perhaps that world that we have built is rooted in something other than God, and it is being shaken. Perhaps the shaking is the answer to our deepest need—the need to apprehend God as the only genuine stability we have. Perhaps we will find our faith renewed when it is *we* who are shaking—trembling in awe of this magnificent God who has the power to shake the heavens and the earth.

In an easily overlooked but profound statement in Eph 1:10, Paul refers to the fullness of the times, “that is, the summing up of all things in Christ.” In other words, the culmination of all of history and the created order comes when all things are summed up in Christ. 1 Cor 15:28 goes further with the statement that “...then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.” What God began for the praise of his glory (Eph 1:6, 12 & 14) will all be summed up in Christ, who will present it all back to the Father so that God is all in all.

There's not much room in that summary for human pride and arrogance. But there is this one man in whom all history culminates, this one human being who is seated upon the eternal throne, this one man who is the great I AM. Paul had it exactly right. May the eyes of our heart be enlightened in the knowledge of him.