

Reverence & Reward

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[0 : 00] Be seated. If you'll open your Bibles to the book of Psalms, we're in Psalm 128 this morning. Psalm 128 is an extraordinarily brief psalm.

I chose it because I wanted to continue something we've been doing through this series, and that is I want to give you the sort of toolkit for how to read the psalms in general.

And this particular psalm is going to give you two toolkits for two particular things you'll see over and over and over in the book. Like one being, you're just going to see when you read psalms and Proverbs in particular, you're going to see a ton of reward language.

And so I want to talk about how to understand the reward language of the scriptures. And then you're also going to see a lot about the fear of the Lord. And I want to talk a little bit about what it means to fear the Lord.

The psalm itself, as I mentioned, is quite short. We can read the whole thing rather quickly. Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways. You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands.

[1 : 05] You shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house. Your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

May you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel. So the first thing let's do this morning, let's break this sermon into two sections. And the first section will just be understanding the reward language in the Bible.

Reward language is central to the essence of Christianity. Hebrews 11.6, without faith it's impossible to please God. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

What's the essence of Christianity? It's a faith relationship with God. And you can't be a faithful Christian without believing that God rewards those who seek him.

[2 : 13] But it's not only central or foundational to Christianity. It's actually foundational to humanity. Proverbs 16.26 is making an anthropological assertion about the nature of human beings.

It's basically saying, what makes us tick? Proverbs 16.26, a worker's appetite works for him. His mouth urges him on. Do you understand what that means?

Proverbs 16.26, a worker's appetite works for him. That means that we are motivated by the rewards that come from our effort. Just as people, that's who we are. We're motivated by the rewards that come from our efforts.

That's why we exert effort, generally speaking. So we really do need to have some clarity about the reward language in the Bible. And not in some way that it blows it all up and mystifies it or supernatural or spiritualizes it.

See, we have a big problem on this subject. And that is because there's this whole subset of heresies related to the so-called prosperity gospel.

[3 : 20] And I have a really deep concern that in an effort to avoid that error, we have plunged into another error. And we have over-spiritualized and over-transcended the reward language of the Bible so as to make it mean almost nothing but you get more of Jesus or something like that.

And in an effort to overcome some of the wrong assertions that the prosperity gospel makes, I believe we have actually spiritualized and really taken away some of the basic motivation structure that the Bible offers.

The Bible actually does have a motivation structure that's consistent with both the nature of God, Hebrews 11, and the nature of man. We work for rewards. And if we blow this up and then we look

around and see a bunch of Christians who are less motivated than ever to be godly, we might ask, maybe that's because you told them that all of the rewards the Bible promises aren't for them. And that they should just be happy to do the right thing. And so we have to be careful when we think about this. There is, of course, some truth to the spiritualization of reward language in the scriptures.

It's just, it's not as simple as we want it to be. Think about why we would want it to be simple. We want it to be simple. And let's say we want it to be spiritual and not physical, maybe for two reasons. [4 : 45] One, we distance ourselves from the prosperity error. And two, we have an easier way of talking to people who are Christians who are not experiencing temporal blessings.

There's going to be people who hear this text today and think, I'm not experiencing this. And we might, instead of saying, well, let's think about it. And, you know, the logical answer is probably, well, just wait.

You know, I waited patiently upon the Lord. You will reap good things if you do not grow weary. But you've got people here who would say, I'm not experiencing these blessings. I'm trying to walk with the Lord. And this great temptation would be to sort of assert that all those blessings are really, but you have Jesus.

It's like, well, yes, but is that how the Bible talks? Because we don't want to be smarter than the Bible. We can't be smarter than the Bible. I think the passage that gives us the most clarity on these issues is something Jesus said in Mark 10, 29 through 30.

This is where Jesus says, if you don't leave any, if you're not willing to leave everything for me, you're not my disciple. And Peter says, we have left everything for you.

[5 : 54] And listen to what Jesus says in Mark 10, 29. I truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions.

And in the age to come, eternal life. This is helpful for all these tensions I've described. It tells us that indeed in the new covenant with Christ, we should still expect temporal blessings as we follow God.

You see that? It says that right there. It also says that that those blessings will be of a type that requires some discernment.

He's not saying that if you leave your father, you will get. What's the ratio here? A hundredfold. He's not saying if you leave your father, you'll get a hundred biological fathers.

So this loosens the language. This loosens reward language in the Bible a little bit without destroying it. We say God is going to bless me if I follow him.

[7 : 09] He's going to bless me in real ways. But also those ways may not be exactly like I'm expecting. So the basic idea here is that we trust God with the timing and the type of reward that he gives us when we follow him.

The timing and the type. We have some confidence of his faithfulness and he will reward those who seek him. He will bless the man who fears him. We just don't want to get overly specific in a sense of saying, and therefore it must be exactly this at exactly this time.

So if you're being kind of a whiny pot about something God isn't doing for you, that's not fearing the Lord. We'll get to fear the Lord in a minute. The fear of the Lord would basically say, God, I trust you that you will reward me for seeking you and that those rewards will be good, but they will be according to your timing and your type.

Here's an example. In Psalm 128, we're told that the man who fears the Lord will have an overflowing, you know, sort of family legacy or so forth.

And I was thinking about old C.S. Lewis this week and I was thinking about how, well, you know, he did eventually get married and he had two step-sons. And he had good relationships with those step-sons, but the biological father was still very much a picture in that situation.

[8 : 28] And so even after their mom died, these kids had just gone through a lot. They'd gone through a divorce, sounds like a dad that wasn't so great. They watched their mom die of bone cancer and wound up, you know, the step-sons of C.S. Lewis.

It's a busy time. Anyway, so C.S. Lewis did have kids in some sense. But really, I would point to the fact that well before this, are there other people that you can think of that have raised more children on the basic nature of Jesus Christ than C.S. Lewis with his Narnia trilogy?

So in some sense, he never had kids of his own, but Jesus' words in this passage are true. He devoted himself to serving the Lord, and he wound up being the father in a reasonably true sense to millions of children.

That's what I mean. God will reward us, and they will be real rewards, but we don't get to call the timing or the type in precision.

I think that's all coming out of this Mark 10, 29 statement from Jesus. So those are some things to think about with rewards. I'd like to talk also just quickly about the ideal person and their ideal attitudes toward rewards.

[9 : 46] I would want you to have three attitudes toward rewards. The first one is I would want you to have a proper ordering of loves, a proper ordering of rewards.

I would want you to want the best things more than you want the less best things, right? That would be very important to just being a mature human is to want better things more than you want less things.

And so the Bible has plenty of instances where Jesus and the Scriptures remind you that there is an order of things you should be seeking. Matthew 16, 26. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world but lost his soul?

That's a statement of a hierarchy or an ordering of loves. We saw last week that David, after paying real tribute to creation, says, But there's something even better, and that's Scripture.

More to be desired than gold or honey are God's laws. So there is an ordering to what we should like. And one of the most tragic things you'll experience as a people watcher is you'll see someone who has been blessed with a ton of tenacity and drive but terrible taste.

[11 : 03] And they will spend all of their God-given potential in self-discipline and drive to get things that are stupid. It's a real rough thing to see.

I remember, and this is, by the way, mostly what you see in the world are people who are, honestly, you should emulate them in their drive and their tenacity.

But what should make you cringe is the things that they spent their life trying to accomplish. So they have the ambition and the drive. They just don't have a proper ordering of desires, a proper ordering of rewards.

About an hour south of me, deep in the Ozark Hills, you get all these little really small towns south of my place that I grew up. You get all these really small towns, and they're all, of course, dying. And, you know, mostly trailers and stuff like that. And there was somebody who made it big. I don't know how, but he made it really big. You know, probably multiple millions of dollars somehow. Honestly, it was probably like an auto accident or something.

[12 : 06] He probably got hit by a truck. I don't know. But anyway, he got a bunch of money, but his taste did not improve. And so in the middle of this town full of trailers and a case, he's in a Dollar General, you've got this huge stucco mansion that's pink with Cupid fountains, you know, nude Cupid fountains all over.

And it's just like, man, like, I would love to have your money. I would not love to have your taste. So one of the big reminders as we think about reward language is, you know, we haven't all been given the same hand of cards from the Lord.

Some of us do have more drive than others. And we think, well, that's kind of unfair. God gave some people more tenacity, more drive than others. It's like, well, it kind of evens out sometimes because some of us actually have a better sense of what we should be seeking.

This psalm, you know, has a good ordering of rewards. This psalm has a good ordering of blessings. This is how I would make your taste if I could.

Essentially, let's go back to the psalm real quick. Psalm verse 1, blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways. First thing we see is a blessing on his work. Verse 2, you shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands.

[13 : 20] You'll be blessed and it shall be well with you. So that's one blessing I think you should want. You should want your work to be blessed. Next, we see his family is blessed. Verse 3, your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house.

Your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall be the man who be blessed who fears the Lord. So I want my work to be blessed. That's a good thing to want. I want my family to be blessed.

That's a good thing to want. And the third is, is like he wants the kingdom to be blessed or the church. The Lord bless you from Zion. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

So that's a good starter point. A good starter pack for good desires. Here's three things you should want. These are good things to want. You'd want your work to be blessed, your family to be blessed, and your church to be blessed.

So make sure you pay attention to your taste, not just your tenacity. It seems like all the social media stuff is all about hustle and not about like, well, what are you hustling for? Do you have like a reasonable desires that are good for you and good for others?

[14 : 17] I see that that gets neglected a lot. So number one would be what you'd want in terms of reward seeking. Make sure you've got good taste and that you have a properly ordered set of rewards that you're seeking.

Number two, make sure that you have an ability to sustain your effort for delayed rewards. What you need is you need the ability to pursue rewards that don't come easily or quickly because those are the best ones.

You could pretty much just, again, evaluate someone's ability to delay gratification and just pin them on the socioeconomic chart like pretty much dead on. This is essentially what separates.

In America, anyway, this is essentially what, for the most part, separates class and economic well-being. It isn't race. It isn't, you know, it's literally just do you have the ability to delay gratification?

If so, I can chart you in a certain place and if not. So the second thing is just like having an ability to pursue rewards that don't come very quickly.

[15 : 24] And all of the rewards listed in Psalm 128 are like that, right? They're all things that take time. Work by definition is a ladder of accomplishments leading to payoffs down the road.

Raising a family is very much that way. And of course, having a passion for the church, having a passion for your local church or the kingdom at large, that's a long-term vision.

So I want you to have really good taste. I want you to be good at delaying gratification and pursuing the rewards that have a big gap between your effort and when you reap.

And third, a love for the process itself. What do I mean by that? Well, this psalm is not saying that this man is doing all this to be blessed.

That's not what's happening here. He just loves God. He just loves God as a person. He has a relationship with God. Are motivations and rewards a part of that?

[16 : 24] Of course, because he's a human. But boy, when you get to the point where you learn to just enjoy the process, the ability to wait for extended periods of time for the payoff becomes massive, right?

If I learn to just love parenting day in and day out, if I learn to just love the basic habits of caring for my wife day in and day out, and that process is rewarding in and of itself, then down the road, see, all that time I don't need payoffs.

I don't need, it's not as transactional. I just love doing the stuff. I love the process. And as I love the process, I grow in my patience because I'm basically getting rewarded every day.

So these are the three things that you would, as I studied the Bible, that you'd want to raise your kids around and you would want to be about as well. Good taste, a proper ordering of values, of rewards.

Number two, the ability to suspend the need for immediate payoff. And three, learning to love the process, learning to love the work itself as an act unto the Lord and so forth.

[17 : 39] And of course, you know, depending on your understanding of Christianity, you probably see how this is all woven in to all of the command structure in the New Testament. When we're told to do things, it's, it's this, all of this stuff is part of it.

It's, it all works together in kind of a harmony. This idea of being able to do the right thing, even if there's not an obvious payout, it's just an expression of loving God.

In the book of Habakkuk, in chapter three, he says this to the Lord, though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit beyond the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food.

The flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

God, the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like deers. He makes me tread on my high places to the choir master with strained instruments.

[18:40] So he is able to say, I still want God to do stuff for me, but also I love God. And even if there's no fig on the tree, even if nothing comes of this in my lifetime, I'm still glad that I'm walking with God.

So those three things, taste, delayed gratification, and loving the process. That seems to be, with all the biblical data, that seems to be how we should be oriented toward rewards.

And you add that stuff to this idea that I will trust God with the timing and type. And then you kind of wind up with, that's how a mature Christian thinks about rewards.

Now, when I say things like, this is how a mature Christian thinks about things, when someone says that, what we should always want to do is we should want to test that against Jesus. Anytime we make an anthropological claim, and I say, this is what a human is, well, let's see.

Because we have the perfect human, and we can look at the perfect human and see if I'm right or not. John 4 would be a great proof text for me to prove that I'm right.

[19:50] Because in John 4, we see, number one, that he does take pleasure in the process. He has just finished talking to the woman at the well. The disciples come up to him and say, hey, have you eaten at all today?

This was a problem for Jesus throughout his ministry. And have you eaten at all today? And he says what? What does he say? He says, my food is to do the will of him who sent me.

So his reward structure, fundamentally, is just to do God's stuff. Walk with the Father. He loves the process. Number two, his ambitions are certainly extended over a period of time.

If you've ever read in Hebrews where it says to fix your eyes on Jesus, who took the cross and forsook the shame and looked to the joy, Jesus is perfect at this.

He is perfect at delaying gratification for big rewards on the back end. In John 4, he says to the disciples, do you not say there are yet four months and then comes the harvest?

[20:48] Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see the fields are white with harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages. See it? Reward language built in. Does he love the process?

Yes, he's happy to just do the work. Does that abandon his desire or his understanding of rewards? No. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life so that the sower and reaper may rejoice together.

So Jesus is both process-oriented and reward-oriented. And finally, he has proper-oriented loves. Jesus has got a real clear structure of what he's seeking.

The first one is to do the Father's will, and the second one is to seek and save the lost. He's got a proper orientation of the things that are important. Gwen Ange and I were pretty young.

Our kids were all babies. I remember the room we were in. So this would have been probably 2000 or so. So probably about 20 years ago or more.

[21:48] We had one of these formative 20-something married talks where we tried to figure out what we should do with our lives and whether we were doing, whether we were on the right track or not.

And I kind of obviously would talk the most in such a situation because I have opinions. And anyway, so I kind of made a big theological, you know, display of like, well, this and this and this and this.

And Ange, and this was one of those moments where you realize, like, God gave me the person I need. After I got done with all of that, she said, so basically what you're saying is there's only two things that survive death, people and God's word, and so we should probably just spend our lives on those two things.

I was like, yes, that's what I'm saying. And so very early on in our 20s in Wesley's bedroom, actually, we were sitting there talking probably because he was in there.

And we came to this conclusion. Our ordering of what's important to us should match what's important to God. What lasts past this life?

[22:53] Two things, people and his word. So let's just invest in those things. And we kind of wound up seeing that the church is the epicenter of where those two values align.

And that's why we've been in the church in the way that we have for all these years. So what about you? I think the big question is, is are your things, the rewards that you're seeking, do they line up to show that you have good taste?

Or did you receive probably subconsciously from the world or the devil? Have you had a set of values that just actually when you coldly analyze them, you realize, if I pursue these with my life, I will have wasted my life.

Like, think about that for a minute. What are you spending your life on? What are you spending your self-discipline on? What are you spending your tenacity on? Like, what is the target for you?

I think that it's important to understand that we all can say these things are the most important. God, family, church, whatever. I would ask you to really take a moment to look at your life and ask, does my life look like I have a proper ordering of loves and values?

[24 : 12] Now, let's talk about the fear of the Lord. If you look at this passage, this short passage, you'll see that this guy's awesome life is bookended and brought to you by the fear of the Lord.

It's like you could take a picture of this guy. He's sitting at a fireplace and his wife is making banana bread or cheesecake. My wife made me a cheesecake.

I had some cheesecake last night. You know, something like that. And he's sitting there and he's got, you know, kids and grandkids or whatever. And he has a love for the Lord. You know, he's just in this sweet thing the Lord has done.

And let's say we're making this a video. At the end of the video, we would just say, like with the small captions at the end, brought to you by the fear of the Lord. Where did all these rewards come from?

They came from the fear of the Lord. Read verses 1 through 4. And see this bookending of the fear of the Lord. Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways.

[25 : 18] You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands. You shall be blessed and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house. Your children will be like olive shoots around your table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. So if you want to understand, once you've figured out that, yeah, you would like rewards and you think you have a pretty good sense of the most important ones and you'd like those, and you're ready to invest kind of a sustained period of effort to get the bigger ones, I will just tell you the way to do that is to fear the Lord.

Fear the Lord is, in the Bible, the thing that blesses people. Let me just read some passages to you. Proverbs 22, 4.

The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor in life. Psalm 34, 9. Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack.

Proverbs 14, 27. The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life that one may turn away from the snares of death. Psalm 25, 14. The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

[26 : 31] Proverbs 19, 23. The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied. He will not be visited by harm. There's tons of verses like that. But then I could go and I could grab all of the verses that talk about when you become wise, you get a lot of blessings.

Right? And there's a lot of those verses that say a wise man is going to be a blessed man. And then I could just take you to Proverbs 9, 10 and say, well, where does wisdom come from?

Wisdom comes from the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 9, 10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is insight. So what I'm saying here is that the structure of Psalm 128 is this man's got a great life.

He's got all the things that are meaningful and good. And it's brought to you by the fear of the Lord. It was brought to him by the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is what produces blessings, real blessings in the life of the Christian, both in this life and in the life to come.

So one of the things I would just tell you is you're fearing something right now. And I would say you need to really consider, make sure you're not living for the world's approval. Because I will just say, like, I could take a snapshot of your mental health and it won't be great.

[27 : 50] And I could take a snapshot of your spiritual health and it won't be great. And I will just say, like, brought to you by the fear of man. You need to understand what you fear.

Whose gaze you're living under. It will dictate the outcome of your life. I see many Christians who simply can't trust the Bible fully because some of it is offensive to the culture.

I'm like, well, you're just being foolish. You're abandoning the fear of the Lord for the fear of the world. And they will not help you in any of these ways.

You should just trust God. How about that is like every sermon forever. You should just trust God. We should just trust God. So let's define the fear of the Lord. For my entire ministry, the church has been confused about the meaning of the fear of the Lord.

I would say that some of the most persistent questions I've received over 20 years of ministry have to do with the fear of the Lord. They just, people, Christians, just have trouble with it.

[28 : 56] And I would do my best to answer it. And of course, you know, I have like a very high preference for older documents. And so I was noticing something.

It took me a while to pick up on what it is. American Christians in particular, Western Christians in particular, struggle with the concept of the fear of the Lord. And older Christians never did.

And you don't ever see this kind of troublesome thoughtfulness about the fear of the Lord in anything that's old. And the reason for that is because we used to fear our parents in a righteous way.

And now parenting has been, this is my theory, by the way, this piece. This is the conclusion I've made after watching all this. There used to be a way that a, even a great home had fear as an element to it.

And it was called filial reverence is the old term. And we have so messed up parenting with therapeutic language that parents don't know how to be fearsome anymore in any kind of meaningful way.

[30 : 08] They are so worried about being harsh and so worried about not being their parent's friend or their kid's friend. So worried about the soft side of the winsome gospel that they have actually not learned how to cultivate a sense of reverence and awe in their home from their kids toward them.

And so I think the reason why I've had to swat these flies for, I guess, more like 30 years now in ministry, why so few Christians in America can grasp the meaning of the fear of the Lord is, is that we have really just torched the fundamental cultivator breeding ground for this sense.

And that is, you used to have homes where the parents were beloved and feared. They would play catch with you.

They would absolutely take care of you. Also, they held a certain amount of weight with their presence that you did not just immediately forget.

And we've buried all of this goodness with all of the examples of abuse. It's another foolish thing to do. Rather than just say, well, let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

[31 : 30] That's pretty much all we do. But anyway, all that to say, not my theory. Americans really have trouble. With this understanding of the fear of the Lord. And the Bible is really clear.

And everybody's been simple about this forever until recently. And that is, it's just a phileo reverence. Phileo reverence. Phileo just means something you owe your parent. Reverence is just awe, honor, weightiness.

One of the Dutch reformers. One of the Dutch reformers, Breckel, said it this way. Phileo fear is a holy inclination of the heart generated by God in the hearts of his children, whereby they, out of reverence for God, take careful pains not to displease God and earnestly endeavor to please him in all things.

And so I think that there's a reason, like, why the daddy God people struggle so much with so much in life. These people who are so overemphasizing the gentleness of God and overemphasizing the he gets us aspect of God.

They don't have the fear of God. And you can see it by the way they live. This is why, you know, when we do women's ministry, we've got to be super careful that we're not leaning into what is really massively produced in that particular space in Christian literature, which is the daddy God doctrine, right?

[32 : 57] Is the fear of the Lord present in our women's ministry? Like, that's a really important question. Are when the ladies gather, are they thinking, I don't want to displease God?

Or is the tone of most gatherings, God has to defend himself against why he's let me go through this or that thing. So we want to make sure that the fear of God is normative in our gatherings because it is the path of blessings.

Another writer who also happens to be Dutch, another theologian modern, says this. To fear the Lord is to be deeply aware that everything I do, say, and think, or don't do and say is open to the all-seeing eyes of God, my creator, father, and judge.

And therefore, I am to be genuinely concerned to live in such a way as to please him and keep my conscience clear before him. I think this captures the essence of what the Bible means when it repeatedly tells us to fear God.

So if you want to understand that, it's going to be more difficult for you unless you happen to be fortunate enough to grow up in a home where there was a filial reverence that was not toxic, not sinful, but godly.

[34 : 06] If you had that, I think you'll probably understand the fear of the Lord. If you didn't, I think it's going to be harder. Okay. Now, one last thing we should say is that this is not merely an attitude.

When you see Psalm 128, the fear of the Lord is not something, a feeling. It's consistent with and synonymous with action. Psalm 128, 1. Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord and who walks in his ways.

In Job 28, 28. Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding. Fear of the Lord is not only an attitude.

It is an action as well. It is a lifestyle, not merely a feeling. For instance, in Hebrews 11, I mentioned the first part with the reward structure that you've got to believe God exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The first example the writer of Hebrews gives to prove his point is Noah. And he says, by faith, Noah, warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear, constructed an ark for the saving of his household.

[35 : 16] Was he blessed? Yes. Was he blessed in the categories we were describing earlier? Yes. Was that blessing a consequence of the fear of the Lord? Yes. Was that fear more like action and not only like attitude?

Yes. So fear is not only an attitude, it's an action. The very next example he provides is Genesis. Josh already, or it is Abraham. Josh already mentioned Abraham.

There's a classic moment when Abraham is about to sacrifice his son Isaac and the angel of the Lord, who is probably Christ, stays his hand and says, now I know you fear God.

So if you're asking yourself, how do I know if I fear God? You can see evidence of that in your actions. You can see that in the way that you carefully measure your behavior, your plans, your goals against what God wants.

You can see that in the way that you sort of move through your day thinking about the fact that you do live your life with a God. You can see that in the way that you confess your sin. Do you fear God? If you do, I think you'll be blessed.

[36 : 20] And I think you'll be blessed in very particular ways. The truth is, is that being a Christian is awesome. It's a wonderful, precious gift because God rewards those who seek him.

We get to walk with God. I get to love the process of just walking with God. I do get blessings on my labors. I do get blessings on my family. I do get blessings on my church.

But all these blessings come according to the timing and the type that God chooses. So I can't, like, fear God all my way to getting the blessings and then suddenly stop fearing God and be a Veruca Salt and say, But I want an Oompa Loompa now, Daddy.

You know, I can't do that. If I'm going to get the reward, I have to trust that God will give me the reward he wants to give me. Now, let's end by doing what's most important with the Psalms always, and that's, like, where's Christ?

Jesus is the archetype of this psalm. He is the most blessed man with the most blessed household, and it was all brought to you by the fear of the Lord.

[37 : 25] It says in verse 1, Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord. Jesus had filial reference for the Father who walks in his ways. Jesus did a marvelous job, a perfect job of obeying the Father and walking in his ways.

Jesus says, I live to do the will of the Father. It wasn't just an attitude. He was taking action. The next thing in the psalm says, You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands, and you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

Here's a marvelous truth. There has never been, nor will there ever be, a three-year period of work that has produced more than the three years Jesus endeavored in his earthly ministry.

It is absolutely, incomparably, the most productive period of work ever recorded in the history of the world. God did indeed bless the labor of his hands.

Let's shrink this down. For about six hours, Jesus did a very particular work. You can expand that.

[38 : 35] You can think about this. His cross, whether you count that as hours or a day, is literally a very small amount of work.

And look at all God the Father has done with this effort that Jesus put in. When he took on sin so that he could then take on the wrath of God against sin, and he engaged in the work of the cross, God has blessed that by producing, well, by bringing many, many sons to glory, many sons and daughters to glory.

God, has God blessed the work of, God blessed the fruit of Jesus' labor? Absolutely. Now it says in the psalm that your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house.

And does Jesus have a wife? Here's where we get into that type and time kind of thing. Does Jesus have a wife like we do? Well, not exactly.

It's something better than that. It's something bigger than that. It's not entirely spiritualized. I mean, the bride of Christ is the church. The point being that as a consequence of Jesus' faithful work under the fear of the Lord, he fell asleep without a bride and woke up with one.

[39 : 55] One born from his wounded side that he shed his precious blood to purchase and to purify so that he might present her to himself without wrinkle, spot, or blemish.

Does he have children? Yeah and no. Time and type. Isaiah 53 says that because of his great sacrifice, there will be no end to his posterity.

He will bring many sons and daughters to glory. And then we see, Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The Lord bless you from Zion.

May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. May you see your children's children. Peace upon Israel. Well, Jesus has been so blessed that he is really the engine of blessing for the entire church.

And so what we see in Psalm 128 actually is a nice little outline of why we all have reason to boast in Christ and the cross alone.

[40 : 57] Because there's one man who showed up and did this perfectly. And so now we can see millions of Christians, not just in this period of time, but throughout history, throughout the world, all walking with Jesus, all learning how to fear him, all learning how to encounter his blessings.

And we could say, this is all brought to you by the fear of the Lord. Specifically, the fear of the Lord from Jesus, the Lord's anointed, toward the Father, who executed the most brilliant and perfect work and brought all of the blessings to us.

Including, including we now have a relationship with God that will allow us to learn how to fear him. So here's what I would suggest for communion. First of all, celebrate the marvelous work that Jesus has done.

That's what Jesus wants us to do every time we celebrate communion. Secondly, ask the Lord, you've been so good to me. I can see that the fear of the Lord is so important. I don't know if this is the shaping value, virtue of my life.

Would you make it so? Teach me to fear you, Lord. Teach me to fear you more, O Lord. So let me pray for us, and then you come up and get the elements, and we'll partake together. Father God, we praise your holy name for how much you love us and how faithful you are to show your love by teaching us how to follow you and how to seek rewards.

[42 : 16] Romans 2 tells us that we should, by faithfulness and well-doing, seek glory, honor, and immortality. And Lord, we want to. We want to pursue the rewards you've set before us.

We want to do that in fear. We don't want to be demanding. We don't want to be entitled. We don't want you to have to answer to our opinions. But Lord, we do accept what your Bible teaches, and that is that you have great things planned for those who seek you.

Would you help us to seek you, Lord? Would you help us to fear you with this filial reverence that is communicated so clearly in Scripture? And God, would you just fill our hearts full of faith? Let us walk out of here, and the next week, eager to live life unto you.

In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.