

A TIME TO FEAR ... GOD

HOW GOD RESCUES US FROM THE TYRANNY & MONOTONY & ENIGMA OF LIFE



- (Psalm 36:1 NLT) Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God at all.
- (Romans 3:16–18 ESV) In their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD ...

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- (Romans 3:16–18 ESV) In their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. **There is no fear of God before their eyes.**
- (Proverbs 1:29–31 ESV) Because they hated knowledge **and did not choose the fear of the LORD**, 30 would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, 31 **therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.**
- (Psalm 19:9 ESV) **The fear of the Lord** is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.
- (Psalm 25:14 ESV) The friendship of the LORD is **for those who fear him**, and he makes known to them his covenant.
- (Psalm 33:18 ESV) Behold, the eye of the LORD is **on those who fear him**, on those who hope in his steadfast love.
- (Psalm 103:17 ESV) But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting **on those who fear him**, and his righteousness to children's children.
- (Proverbs 1:7 ESV) **The fear of the LORD** is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- (Proverbs 9:10 ESV) **The fear of the LORD** is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
- (Proverbs 14:26 ESV) **In the fear of the LORD** one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.
- (Proverbs 14:27 ESV) **The fear of the LORD** is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.
- (Proverbs 15:33 ESV) **The fear of the LORD** is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.
- (Proverbs 19:23 ESV) **The fear of the LORD** leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.
- (Proverbs 23:17 ESV) Let not your heart envy sinners, but **continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.**
- (Acts 9:31 ESV) So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. **And walking in the fear of the Lord** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

1. We are rescued by God from the monotony of life when we fear God and fully accept the seasons and times of life "under heaven" as directly from the hand of God, 3:1-8, cf. 2:24-26.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 ESV) **For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:** 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a

time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

A. The times and the seasons are from the hand of God.

- (Ecclesiastes 2:24 ESV) There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. **This also, I saw, is from the hand of God.**

B. We fear God when we fully accept his providential rule in appointing a time and a suitable moment for every person and every event in life "under heaven."

C. We fear God when we live with an awareness of the truth and the comprehensive nature of his providence in the monotony of life.

Monotony... tedious sameness; wearisome uniformity; wearisome routine; lack of variety and interest; tedious repetition and routine.

Providence is God working out his plan in fulfillment of his purpose by his power and according to his wisdom.

D. When we believe that God is so great so to have absolute control over life, then we are able to believe him for his purpose for this world and to glorify his name.

- (Psalm 86:12 ESV) I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and **I will glorify your name forever.**
- (Psalm 8:1 ESV) O Lord, our Lord, **how majestic is your name in all the earth!** You have set your glory above the heavens.

E. When we live to glorify his name, we live according to God's purpose and so even in the monotony of life we thrive and our lives overflow with meaning and significance.

- (Psalm 115:1 NIV) Not to us, Lord, not to us **but to your name be the glory,** because of your love and faithfulness.

Looked at as a whole life under the sovereign reign of God may seem very impersonal, maybe even like God isn't there ... *until we are living for his purpose to his glory which means that our lives now have eternal significance.*

F. Living to his purpose for his glory we understand the very personal nature of our relationship with our Creator.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:2a ESV) **A time to be born, and a time to die.**
- (Psalm 139:1–6 NLT) **O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.**
2 You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. 3 You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. 4 You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. 5 You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. 6 **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!**
- (Psalm 139:14–16 NLT) Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how

well I know it. 15 **You watched me** as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. 16 **You saw me** before I was born. **Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.**

- (Psalm 56:8 NLT) You keep track of **all my sorrows.** You have collected **all my tears** in your bottle. **You have recorded each one in your book.**

2. We are rescued by God and profit in life when we fear him and embrace the humdrum of daily life mixed with the enigma of the eternal for what it is—God's gift, 3:9-13.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:9–13 ESV) What gain has the worker from his toil? 10 I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. **Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.** 12 I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; 13 also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.

A. When we fully submit to the sovereign plan and purpose of God, we will then begin to see the beauty of what God has done and is doing in our lives and in the world around us.

Derek Kidner ... Our natural reaction might be to seek reality in something beyond the reach of change, treating the world of everyday experience as a mere distraction. ... The trouble for us is not that life refuses to keep still, but that we see only a fraction of its movement and of its subtle, intricate design. Instead of changelessness, there is something better: a dynamic, divine purpose, with its beginning and end. Instead of frozen perfection there is the kaleidoscopic movement of innumerable processes, each with its own character and its period of blossoming and ripening, beautiful in its time and contributing to the over-all masterpiece which is the work of one Creator. ... **We are like the desperately nearsighted, inching their way along some great tapestry or fresco in the attempt to take it in. We see enough to recognize something of its quality, but the grand design escapes us, for we can never stand**

back far enough to view it as its Creator does, whole and entire, from the beginning to the end. [Kidner, D. (1984). *The Message of Ecclesiastes: A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance*. (J. A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.) (pp. 38-39). England: Inter-Varsity Press.]

B. When we submit to God in the monotony of daily life alongside the enigma of the eternal, we profit in life.

Enigma ... a mystery, problem, puzzle, riddle, paradox, conundrum, teaser; something hard to understand or explain; something that is perplexing, puzzling, baffling, ambiguous or seemingly inexplicable.

C. When we fully submit to the sovereign plan and purpose of God, God takes us beyond this world and beyond ourselves to share in his holiness—this is true living.

- (2 Corinthians 7:1 ESV) Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.
- (Exodus 15:11 ESV) Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?
- (Psalm 29:2 ESV) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.
- (Psalm 96:9 ESV) Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!
- (Ephesians 4:23-24 ESV) And to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.
- (Hebrews 12:10 ESV) For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

D. To submit to God's plan and purpose in our daily lives, we must accept life "as is"—as a gift from the hand of God.

E. When we accept our lives in the here and now as a gift from God then we are able to experience the "nothing better" of this life.

Interesting Note: The "nothing better" joy spoken of here is the same as the "it doesn't get any better than this" joy in the beer commercial because "under the sun" it is true—"it doesn't get any better than this."

- (Ecclesiastes 3:12 NLT) So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can.

3. We are rescued by God from the monotony of life when we fear God and fully accept the exhaustive, eternal nature of what he does, 3:14-15.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:14-15 ESV) I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. 15 That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away.

A. God's timeframe for the work he does is eternity.

B. God's work is exhaustive—nothing can be added.

C. God's work is final—nothing can be taken away.

D. The purpose of God's work: God does these things—all the above—so that we will fear him.

Fear ... [yare' /yaw-ray] to fear; to regard with feelings of respect and reverence; consider hallowed or exalted or be in awe of; to stand in awe of, be awed; to reverence, honor, respect; to be dreadful, terrible; to cause astonishment and awe, be held in awe; to inspire reverence or godly fear or awe.

- (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 ESV) The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

E. God will not overlook the past—we will be held accountable.