

The Seven Spirits of God Understanding and Fear of the Lord

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It is undoubtedly true that the references go together - wisdom and understanding, counsel and power, and so on. And I didn't really have time in this series to show you the connections, as you went through. Whereas humans say "Knowledge is power" it is actually the godly counsel that's power. There are those kinds of connections throughout.

I would like us to focus now on the spirit of understanding. This is from the book of Isaiah the 11th chapter, referring to the seven spirits of God. And in this final set, I'd for us to cover understanding and I'd like for us to also talk about the fear of the Lord, understanding and the fear of the Lord. Turn with me, if you would please, to the book of Daniel chapter 9 at verse 22. This is the reference to the seventy sevens of the book of Daniel, and so I'd to begin with verse 20 and we'll read through 22. "While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sins and the sins of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for His holy hill, while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, 'Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray an answer was given which I've come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; therefore, consider the message and understand the vision.'"

"Understand the vision." Of course, understanding, in the plain meaning of it is like saying, "Ah, I get it. I get it." When you don't have understanding of the things of God they're foolishness to you because the ways of God are vastly different from the ways of man. Jesus said it this way. "You are from beneath, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." The lack of understanding that humans have is in good measure related to the frame of reference - or the point of view - that humans have. We mentioned earlier on that humans live in time and space and so their way of thinking is a linear way of thinking; whereas God is eternal and His ways have an eternal point of view. Now, if you go back to the example I gave you in that particular message when we talked about counsel, we talked about the fact that John, two thousand years ago, saw us. Two thousand years before we were born, John saw us before the throne. Now, if your point of view is an eternal point of view, then your understanding of events will be very different than if your point of view is natural.

If your point of view is a natural point of view, it means that it's linear; you think in terms of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. But if your point of view is eternal, you know the end from the beginning. So, when you first see a thing occur, that's not necessarily the first time it has happened. If you're thinking in a linear way, of course that makes no sense. Because, in a linear way (linear simply means 'on a line') yesterday, today, and tomorrow—that's linear. If things move in a line in this fashion, then the only way things make sense is for you to see them in terms of past, present, and future. But, if you know the end from the beginning, to talk in terms of the future is meaningless to you. Because—
 -"Before Abraham was, I am." Do you remember that one? When Jesus said it, the people looked at Him and they said, "Why would you say a thing like that?" And then they began to try to assume an understanding of His mental state. Because, when Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am", He was a man of about 31 or so years of age and Abraham had already lived and died almost 1,500 years before that. So, for Him to say, "Before Abraham was, I am", to the Jews - to whom Abraham was THE guy, there was nobody bigger than Abraham; approaching him in stature may have been Moses, but Abraham was the father. So when Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am", their point of view was, 'Why would you want to say that,' because clearly from a linear standpoint, somebody who is here is not before somebody who lived 1,500 years before. That just doesn't work that way. In a linear way, Abraham was, and then there was Jesus 1,500 years later and it can't be any other way. But from an eternal point of view it's not a matter of past, present, and future. From an eternal point of view, you begin knowing the end from the beginning.

Now, what is even more valuable than that is the concept of what is actually eternal? You see, an eternal thing - when it comes into time - cannot be affected by time, it affects time. And an eternal thing does not finish or conclude in time. It touches down, as it were, in time, affects time - but it goes on. I will first explain this to you in terms of the usage of the word "eternal" and then we'll give an example, or we'll give maybe several examples. This has to do with "understanding" because, if things are presented to you that have an eternal origin, you cannot understand a thing of an eternal origin from a worldly point of view, from the point of view of the linear. It's impossible. It's impossible.

And I'll explain this now. There's a Greek term that is translated "eternal"; it's the word "aeion". We have a familiarity with the word when we talk about "aeions and aeions ago". Now, from an eternal standpoint the word "aeion" has multiple meanings. One of the meanings of the word "aeion" is "for a particular age". So, for example, the Word says there will always be a man on David's throne, that is, for the age of man. In that sense, you often will find the word "aeion" used in conjunction with the word "everlasting" and it means it will last for that age. And that age is such a complete thing, that if it lasts for that age it's "everlasting". Sort of like if your tire lasts for the length of the life of your car, you could call it an "everlasting tire" in that sense. It's kind of a silly

example, but if a thing lasts for the duration of the age, then it's "everlasting" with respect to that age. So, when the scriptures speak of "always a man on David's throne" it doesn't mean that in the coming ages there will be a man on David's throne. It means that for the age of man, and from the point of the inception of David's throne, that there will be a man on David's throne. That's a valid and a frequently used aspect of the word "aeion".

Another aspect of the word "aeion" is "from age to age". That means that there are many ages, and an eternal thing defies decay in relationship to the coming of an age and the ending of that age. So, you have a spirit, for example, that is eternal; it comes from the realm of the eternal. For the thing to be eternal, it simply means it's not from the realm of the natural. Because, there's the natural and then there's the eternal. We attribute a lot of different kinds of meanings to the word "eternal" or everlasting, when really what "eternal" means is "not from the natural, not from time". If a thing is eternal, it means it doesn't come from time. So, it may operate in time in a way that doesn't follow the rules of time. So, for example, an evil spirit when it comes into the realm of time, is not from time. So, it can behave in a manner that defies the conventions of time. It doesn't necessarily mean that that spirit is greater than humans. But it does mean that the way we will deal with that spirit in time cannot be by the norms of time. The way you have to deal with that spirit is by the conventions that it understands. So, for example, you don't deal with the evil spirit by asking it if it would please obey you, because it doesn't have any intentions of obeying you. But, if you command it according to the name and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, then it has to obey you. Why? Because it is subject to the conventions to which it is subject and those conventions are not necessarily the conventions of time. It is critical that you understand, then, when a thing has been born and is exclusively a matter of time or when a matter is outside of time and comes into time. When you understand that, then you can begin to understand the protocol to which it will respond. So, if you attempt to deal with an eternal being - a being outside of time - through the conventions of time, do not be surprised if it doesn't respond to you. So, when the seven sons of Sceva said to the demoniac, "We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches", don't be surprised that the outcome was like it was. Because, those spirits were not obligated to respond to natural men who are not using or not utilizing the authorities that were appropriate to the restraint of the demonic. So, they responded and said, "Well, Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are you?" They saw no reason to obey the seven sons of Sceva.

So, a thing that comes into time that is not of time, will behave itself in a manner that is unique to it and may not observe the conventions of time, and I gave the example of the demonic. When you see that, recognize that it is not that the thing is more powerful than you; it is that you don't understand how it is able to behave in time. So, for example, again using the demonic, if you shouted at a demon, treating it as if it were a human, what would you tell the demon? Basically, you tell him you don't know what you are

doing, because you are addressing it as you would address a human. And it picks up on that and it will run you around. Sometimes it will say, "I am more powerful than you." I've had them tell me that. And the reason I am using the demonic is, that's a creature that's not from time that we have interactions with pretty regularly. And I've had demons say to me, "I'm more powerful than you, you can't make me leave." Now it's trying to play with me by taking advantage of what it thinks is my ignorance of its restraints. Now what it's really telling me is that the host has not required it to leave, and therefore I cannot require it to leave. That's what it's telling me. But, if I don't know that, he will tell me, "I am more powerful than you," which means "Forget the host. Between you and me, I am the boss." So it'll take advantage of my linear thinking, but when you respond appropriately-- and how you respond appropriately is to understand the nature of the spirit and how it is to be governed and how you can get rid of it. So, for example, if you ever run into that situation the norm that you're dealing with is that it is probably a familiar spirit. A familiar spirit is used to controlling the mind of the person that it occupies. It's been there so long it knows that person's patterns of thought and the person, then, is not able to distinguish itself from the spirit, so when the person hears the spirit speaking, the person thinks it's his [the person's] spirit. Now how do you get rid of a spirit in a situation like that? The answer is, Jesus said, "This kind doesn't come out except by fasting and prayer." So you send the person to fast and to pray for a brief period of time and in the time of fasting and prayer the Holy Spirit will separate out the person from the spirit. And the Holy Spirit will speak to the person and the person will then be able to distinguish between the person's own thoughts and the demon's control of the person's thoughts. When you do that and come back, when you command the spirit, it will behave in such a way that the person will be able to distinguish between himself or herself and the spirit. That's why Jesus told us this kind doesn't come out except by fasting and prayer, because Jesus understood that we did not understand the ways, the devious ways, that spirits operate, taking advantage of our lack of understanding of the spiritual realm or the supernatural realm, because our normal way of thinking is that we're governed by the natural realm. But, the key and the thing I want you to understand is this: When you understand that you are dealing with a matter or a thing from the eternal realm that's come into time then the way you deal with it is different than if it's a natural thing that you're dealing with in time. And God is well able to give you the understanding of what you are dealing with.

One of the ways that the Holy Spirit imparts understanding to us - one of the ways and not the only way and probably not even the greatest way - but one of the ways that the Holy Spirit imparts understanding to us as a routine matter is this. You'll remember reading in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 among the gifts of the spirit, one of the gifts of the Spirit is referred to as the "gift of the discerning of spirits". When it comes to having understanding in your dealing with the demonic, the Holy Spirit equips you specifically for that by giving you the gift of the discerning of spirits so that you can understand what you're dealing with. You're lacking in nothing; in the matter of being a new creation in

Christ you are lacking in nothing.

Now, to recap...when we spoke of the word "aeion", we see that one of the meanings is "for that age", for the age of man. For example, there will always be a man on David's throne. Another meaning of the word "aeion" is "from age to age". That means that the thing is of an eternal nature and it moves from one age to another. Your spirit is a thing of an eternal nature. When your body dies your spirit will not; it will move from age to age. Because an eternal thing is not subject to the decay of time, though it may have its own end, because God has reserved a certain judgment for the demonic and those creatures from the eternal realm who disobeyed God, but the mere end of time doesn't wear out that spirit. It's why you have to be careful when you are in the realm of spirits, because, spirits have been around a long time and because they do not get old or wear out because they are not subject to time - they can die, they can be extinguished, but it's not simply by the passage of time. That being so, they have understanding of things from 100 years ago. You're watching on television, some of you have probably seen the program on television called "Crossing Over", and you wonder, "Well how could he do that?" Simple...these spirits were around for a long time and they are well able to give information and the person is able to hear that information. You know what's sad about that, is this guy is probably, his gift in God is probably that of the discerning of spirits, but because it's not being operated by the rule of the Spirit, the spirits themselves are telling him who they are, and the spirits themselves are giving him information. Well, they will give enough information but the whole point is to deceive you because the spirits want control. And when you don't understand what's going on, you may look good, you may look great to people who are watching what you're doing, but the truth is you're just a puppet dancing on a string. And that's all he is; he's a puppet dancing on a demonic string. It's not something that we ought to want to emulate, it is something that you should be extremely, exceedingly cautious of. Because, again, to go back to our subject, the point is if you do not have understanding, then you are as likely to be the victim as you are to benefit from understanding.

On this cosmic highway, on this highway of the invisible, the human is the least accomplished player. On this cosmic superhighway where spirits are present, the human is the least accomplished player, and yet we step onto it in our arrogance thinking, "Hey, I got this." No. It's isn't that you got it-- it's that you've been had. And they will play with you, these demons will play with you until they gain control. I've seen too many times where this is so. And I don't have time for more examples.

The third aspect of the word "aeion" is "for endless ages." Or another rendition of it is "age upon age" or "endless ages". So, the three meanings then are: "for the age", "from age to age", and "for age upon age" or "endless ages". So the eternal then, is very different from the natural. When you consider that the scope of our lives is about threescore and ten, according to the scriptures, if you have more than that you are on

somebody else's time. But 70 is the natural span, according to the Word. Seventy years, or a little bit more--give it 100, 150. What is that, compared to the whole age of man, which is 6000? And what is the whole age of man compared to "age upon age" in the extreme, or "from age to age"? And what is that, compared to "age without end"? Well, God's point of view is the last one, for endless ages. God sees the matter from the standpoint of endless ages. And what He inaugurates here has a context of "endless ages". Do you think that we might be able then to conclude that unless the Lord shows you how this makes sense you can't get it? Unless the Lord shows you...it's not that... guys, it's not that God is hiding the ball from anybody. It is just that we don't have the background in terms of the length of time to get it. You can't figure it out if you have a span of 70 years plus or minus, and you are dealing with matters that do not have time quantification. You can't figure it out. It's not that people are dumb, or it's not that it's too complicated; it's that it's such a different point of view, such a different point of view. You can't figure it out because it is so radically different.

Consider the example that we looked at yesterday, when I said that there were two occasions recorded in scripture in which a man's side was opened. Well, the moment you heard that, it made sense to you. Why? Because you could quickly associate Adam and Jesus. But my point was to say, even though chronologically Adam was the first, the reason it happened in the way that it did with Adam was because of the last One. It was because of Jesus and His side being opened up and the Bride being admitted through His side. That's why Adam's side was opened up in the first place. But, chronologically, it was Adam whose side was first opened. But because God knows the end from the beginning, He gave relevance to the thing in the beginning based upon the way this thing would be summed up. And it's always like that. In the things of God it's always like that. The thing you see first is not necessarily the first occurrence of the thing, and the thing you see first is not necessarily the complete expression of the thing. It's why the first commonly is the shadow to prepare you to see the fullness. And that's what Jesus was saying then when He said, "Before Abraham was I am." They heard Him in a linear way and their point of view was, "What's His motive for saying this? He's so obviously wrong, what is His motive for saying this?" Because, once you agree that someone is wrong, then you have to go about trying to find the motive. It never occurred to them that Jesus was right. Was Jesus right? Was He before Abraham? Yeah. But He wasn't talking about being born into the world; He was talking about the existence in the plane of the eternal, in the realm of the eternal, and not in natural. So, there is that aspect of the difference in understanding. The point of view is completely different. When you look at it from God's point of view, He's coming at the same thing for endless ages.

Now prophecy is God's revelation to you of what He already knows and what is sure to occur. Prophecy is God's revelation to us of what God already knows and is sure to come to pass. Now prophecy may occur in a couple of different ways: one is by symbol and the other is by actuality; prophesy by symbol or by actuality. Daniel said, "I saw in the night

visions. Four great beasts rose up out of the sea. One looked like a lion, another like a bear, another like a leopard, and the fourth had seven heads and ten horns. Daniel said, "I was puzzled by this dream, so I asked one of them," meaning one of the persons in the vision, "to tell me the true meaning of all of this. And he gave me this explanation, 'The four great beasts you saw are four kingdoms that will arise from the earth.'" All right, now, that's a very normal form of prophecy, by symbol.

One of the reasons that God reveals the future to us in dreams is because our mental state cannot be induced - cannot be brought forward - into believing in the things that are there that we can't see. For example, in the days of Daniel, how would you explain to Daniel the concept of a global kingdom? How would you? What was Daniel's concept of the earth, let alone the globe? You couldn't. So He gives him an understanding of this through a vision. And this vision has four great beasts. Now, many of the prophetic words of God referred to in scripture, and even many of the prophetic words of God today, are given in this form of symbol. And usually when that happens there is a need to interpret the dream. Because, it's just a symbol, it's not the thing itself. But, in the majority of cases in scripture and in the majority of cases in understanding in actuality, what you are given prophetically is actually God pulling back the veil and letting you see at a time different from the one you are standing in.

The classic example of this is in the book of Revelation, the 9th chapter. The problem is when the vision that you have is so different from anything you understand, the tendency is to make it allegorical. In Revelation 9 God is giving us a vision of the day when the pit is opened and the entire hoard of the demonic are thrown out of it and come into the earth. And John was seeing it the way it is actually going to happen. Now, it's hard to sell that to people who a) do not believe in the demonic; and b) do not believe there is a day when they'll be cast out into the earth; and c) who have no comprehension of how they look. But when it says that "an angel removed the seal over the abyss and they came down out of the abyss onto the earth like locusts", hoards of the demonic. And it says, in fact, "and the sound of their wings was like the noise of horses running into battle". Well, what have you seen or heard people do with that scripture forever? They say "that sounds like helicopters, to me". No. Demons have wings, some of them. I'll show you. Some of them were angels who had six wings. Do you remember in the book of Isaiah the 6th chapter, the year that King Uzziah died, the Lord appeared and before the Lord were seraphims who had six wings; with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew?. They had six wings. Some of the seraphs fell, and they are among the ones who are the winged creatures and they come into time and space. But, you see, it is a whole lot more compatible with our rational thinking to say, "That sounds like helicopters to me." But if you were to say, "No, that's how demons look when they come into time and space", who wants to believe that when you can't see a demon in the first place?

But don't you see that it is our failure to understand that continues to make us vulnerable. Sometimes our pride (and I am not speaking necessarily to you, but the general condition) in the rational is the stumbling block to understanding the supernatural-- exactly what Jesus faced when He was here. He said, "Tear down this temple and I will build it up again in three days." They thought He was talking about the temple that they just walked away from. But, in fact, He was talking about His own body. But their understanding of the resurrection did not allow them to believe that He could die and be raised in three days. So, their frame of reference was the temple, and they thought, "Boy, that's going to be quick construction work." Another example of the same thing, Jesus said, "Do you see these stones of this temple? There will come a time when there will be not one stone left upon another that will not be thrown down." These were massive stones, some weighing many tons, and the disciples could not envision the circumstance in which these stones would be overthrown. Do you know how they were overthrown? And every one was overthrown. And I've seen then, and not one is stacked upon another. Do you know they were overthrown? The temple had a thin sheet of gold over the top, over the roof. When the Romans captured the temple they burned it. The heat of the furniture and all the things in the temple melted the gold on the roof and it ran down between the cracks in the stones where it was discovered by the Roman soldiers. And the rumor spread that the Jews had used gold as mortar to put the stones together and those Roman legionnaires figured out ways to topple every stone. Now, Jesus didn't tell them that was how it was going to happen. He just said, "You see the stones of this temple? There'll not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." And He didn't tell them how. But that prophecy was meant to be actually fulfilled. The only time when prophecy is not to be actually fulfilled is when it says so. If it says it's a symbol, if it says "I'm speaking allegorically", then look for the interpretation. But if it doesn't say it's speaking allegorically, consider that it's natural, but it may be outside of your time. It's clear from the Book of Daniel that the angel Gabriel came to give insight and understanding to Daniel.

What I want to do here is summarize what I have said about understanding. The ways of God are foolish to the natural mind because God sits in the eternal in the most complete usage of the term "eternal"-- "age upon age" or "endless ages". In this way, God knows the end from the beginning. And before a thing is even created or deployed, God knows its exact function, where it is to go and how it is to go. And when God gives you understanding, in effect, God shows you how it all works. I'll refer at this point in this message to my whole series on Spiritual Authority, for we spoke about the reason for and the purpose of spiritual authority because the demons were more powerful than the humans and they resisted God's decision about creation and God's choice of humans as His heirs. I just want to refer you to that set of tapes and use that by reference as an example to say, if you don't understand that, then it's impossible to understand spiritual authority. Because, everything that God does has a frame of reference that is different from the linear; everything that God says has a frame of reference that is different from

the natural. So, when you lack understanding of what you're looking at, ask God but do not be surprised if the understanding that He gives you is off the charts, and never look to the world to authenticate or to approve of the understanding that God gives you, because it cannot. So, when God give you understanding keep it in your heart and know that that's the way it is, that's how it works, that's what it is, that's how it functions.

Now, I have saved the last piece, which is the Fear of the Lord. Hebrews 12:22 and we're going to just try to get very quickly to the essence of the fear of the Lord, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks of a better word than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from Him who warns from heaven? At that time His voice shook the earth, that is, when He spoke from heaven. But now He has promised once more 'I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.' The word 'once more' indicates the removing of what can be shaken, that is, created things, so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire." "The fear of the Lord," the Word says, "is the beginning of wisdom."

We lament the fact that there appears to be no fear of God anymore, not in the world and even to the same degree not in the church, no fear of God. Because, men have come to be so familiar with what they think are the ways of God, that now they act as if whatever they say, God is saying. If you look upon much of the religious stuff that is going on today and the exposure of what has been hidden for so long under the cover of it, you cannot conclude that religion has feared God anytime recently. The fear of the Lord has two aspects to it. One is to be dreadfully afraid of God and the other is to look on God with such awe that you are exceedingly reluctant to touch anything that's God's in any way other than how He would have you touch it. Now make no mistake: both things have to do with the fear of the Lord. If you do not fear God in the latter way, you will surely experience fearing Him in the former way. In other words unless you have come to the place of reverential awe of the living God, seeing Him for who He is, seeing Him for how He is, then all that remains is a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, wrath that will devour the adversary. It is better to have the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, than it is the dread of the Lord which is the prelude to the unimaginable wrath of God. You cannot begin to imagine how complete the wrath of God can be, and it's reserved for wicked men.

Now, let's center entirely on the first of the two, the fear of the Lord, the respect and awe

that is due to the Lord. This scripture says, "Let us serve God acceptably with reverence and awe because He has shaken everything that can be shaken and He has given us a kingdom that cannot be shaken." People today, even in the church, do not appreciate the intricacy of the mind of God, the order, the form, the unimaginable complexity of the Most High. For example, just one of the things we are looking at up here: the salmon come back up the river to spawn and then it dies. The new salmon keeps the cycle going, but in its death or dying the old salmon provides food for the bears. The dead and decaying salmon provide nutrients for the soil and causes it to be rich to sustain massive forests which filter the carbon dioxide from further south from here and recycles fresh air, so we could both drive our cars and breath clean air at the same time and that's just one little cut of the intricacy of God. It's one little thing, something He probably did on a Thursday afternoon. Think of your own bodies and the way that all the parts are designed to not only work together, but to supply and sustain and function. Think of the cycles of how God fertilizes the soil of a forest by causing all the leaves to fall in one time of the year and then brings on a whole new crop of leaves the next year. Now if God had missed it and had made plastic leaves, that wouldn't have been able do the job. In nature, the cycles of nature - whether it's humans, animal life, plant life - all of these cycles and systems' work and they not only work independently, they work together and they not only work together, they're interdependent and God figured all of that out and then just said, "Let there be." And there was. It's incredible this God that we take for granted or say He doesn't exist. This morning Lucy and I were on the balcony and she said to me, "Two-thirds of the earth is covered by this and God keeps it all in balance and it all functions. How could somebody say there is no God?" The answer is: He's a fool. The opposite of one who fears God is a fool.

Now, we who know God and can appreciate God, what we see of Him are not just these things in nature. We watch what He's shaken up in our lives. He's shaken up our settledness and at the time He was doing it, we did not very much appreciate Him for doing it because we had come to depend upon our settledness, the predictability, the normalcy. But He came along and He shook it up. Because, if He didn't shake it up, we and these things that we hold so dear, would fall into complacency and the things would decay and we'd be totally unprepared for the next season in God. So, in His goodness He comes along whenever everything seems to be going just fine, and when we finally got it to where we like it, He comes in and He shakes it all up and we feel distressed and disturbed by the process. However, when it is done are we not always able to look back and see what an incredible thing God did for us?

Consider some of the things we see: The way God has dealt with our children, how we didn't want Him to deal with our children in those ways; we wanted to deal with our children for ourselves, but we could never have gotten it right, but He did. At the time we wished He would not have. At the time we just wanted to throttle them or whoever was hassling them, but when God worked it all through, you realized that, like us, our

children became who they are and were able finally to mature and take their places because of God's faithfulness to see what needed to be done and His determination to do it and the fact that when He does it, it is the most excellent thing that can be done. Shaking for us is never pleasant, and it's why we avoid it and why, if left to ourselves, we will never do it or allow it to be done. Somebody must love us more than we love ourselves - or more even than we love each other - to be able to take us on and to do it when we're grumbling the whole time He's doing it, resisting Him the whole way, and yet He stays faithful to Himself and gets it done. But I have noticed that those of you who have come to appreciate what God has done, even though at the beginning you didn't want Him to do it, and didn't very much care to have Him do that, but you've come back. Many of you have come back and have said, "Thank God that He did not listen to me and He did it anyway." Those are the beginnings of the worship of God with reverence and awe.

I find that I don't ask God for anything anymore. You know, I have tried to ask God for things, here lately. I tried to ask Him, but I find that while I'm thinking about what I was going to ask Him for - I do not consider wisdom a thing; I'm talking here about material things or to arrange my circumstances differently or something like that - I find that even as I tried to step up to that, I find myself saying, "Why don't you just ask Him to arrange it for you and then just step in to what He's arranged for you? Why do you want to tell Him what to do? Don't you know the difference? Don't you understand the qualitative difference between when He does it for you and when you do it for yourself?" And I frankly have come to the place anymore where I really don't ask God for things. I ask him for wisdom. I found myself the other day asking God to make me perfect in love. It was one of those things the moment it came out of my mouth I want to stuff it back in because I knew it was going to cost me but He had put the hook in my jaw, showed me the excellence of His point of view, the completeness of His love, and He hooked and drew me and for a moment I thought, "Hey, I like this." and so I said, "Yeah, I want one of that." Then I realized what I was volunteering for. So, I hope He doesn't do it anytime soon. (No, I am just kidding.)

It comes to be that as you walk with God more and more, you find that the list of things you want Him to do for you diminishes, not because you don't have needs but because you are so sure that He knows how to take care of your needs better than you can and more than that, you find that when you tried to take care of your needs or when you tried to fashion the remedies, it always has an element of uncertainty to it, unpleasantness to it, unsettledness to it. And you have also found that whenever you just let Him to do it and the way you normally come to that place is you have tried everything you can think of and it doesn't work and when you say, "Okay, you do it." and He does it, you see that He does it in a more excellent way. At least once in your life it'll happen to you that way. And the reason is for you to get used to the idea that it isn't that He doesn't know what you need. It is that He knows all of what you need but you tend to focus on the particular

thing that you happened to be obsessed with at the time. And if we -- I shouldn't say "you", I should say "we". If we find ourselves obsessed with a particular thing and that's all we are hammering on, all we want, then we will shorten God's timing if we could. We will interrupt the sequence that He's set in place and, even if we got the thing, all of what else needed to be in place so we could enjoy the thing would be absent, and the thing then becomes a millstone around our necks. Listen, it's better that you arrive where you need to arrive late and be fully prepared, than to arrive early and not have enough to sustain your being there. It is better that God brings you later in your life when you're fully prepared to your destiny and to the completeness of it, than for Him to bring you early. When you're young, if you're not familiar with failure, if you've not been made familiar with failure while you are young, you cannot maintain success later on because you don't know how to live.

We have often thought that the dealings of God as He's dealt with us, have been hard or difficult or unloving, but the truth of the matter is God isn't doing just one thing at a time. God knows for you to be able to sustain something He has to deliberately work on you in many areas at the same time and sometimes God will take on areas in your life on which to work that you don't even know you need work in, let alone being willing to give Him permission to work in these areas. But God sees the whole thing and when He works, not only in nature and not only in the human body, but when He works in your life, He does such a complete work. Listen, you can count on this being true. This is never not true. This is a double negative. It is never not true. I am not telling you something that God does for me that He doesn't do for you or for anyone else. For God is no respecter of persons. The thing that God wants us to come to is: The certainty of how He is. Our greatest security is knowing Him. Why would I say that I don't need to ask God anymore for anything? The reason is, He has fully taken into account what I need and what He gives me and when He gives to me and how He gives it to me are always more, always better, always more complete than how I could've gotten it. I'm telling you, I've tried the other way. I know how it is to try to manipulate God and at times He let me just to show me the bitter fruit of trying to manipulate God. Once you learn that, boy you don't want any more of that. But I have always seen God give me more than I asked Him for. Why, why would He do that? Because He's generous. It's His nature and not only has He given more quantitatively, He's given me better qualitatively and He's given me the thing in the time that I could sustain it.

You know, our problem is never about getting stuff. We can get pretty much anything we want. The problem is not with getting it, the problem is with keeping it. When God gives it to you, not only has He given it to you and you have it, but He will give you what it takes to keep it. The hassle is always in trying to keep it when you've gotten it by the sweat of your own brow. That's always the problem. When God gives it to you, He knows how to cause you to sustain it and so He may give it to you later than He'll give it to you sooner. Many times the reason you even ask for a thing is because God actually

put it in your heart to ask for it but if you are un-contented with God's way of doing it and you reach out to make it happen on your own, apart from the timing of the Lord, then the bitterness of it is you got it before the time. When God instructs you as to how He wants to give it to you and when He wants to give it to you, you can enter into it, possess it, and enjoy it for as long as you and the Lord want for you to have it. When you begin to see, not just the intricacies of God in nature with every snowflake being different....somebody said when we had just come on board the ship, somebody said, "Isn't it amazing, look at all these people and there are not two of them alike?" And we don't even look closely like each other. Six billion of us on the planet and there are no duplicates. Is that fantastic or what? That's incredible, that God has that kind of diversity. In nature He's like that, in our lives personally, and in the pursuit of destiny He's like that. He'll shake us up when we don't want to be shaken and He'll deliver us out of evil when we don't know how to be delivered. And this is the norm for God. This is normal for God. The fear of the Lord is this: When you know how God is and you totally trust Him to be that way-- that's the fear of the Lord. You know how God is and you totally trust Him to be that way. You set your plans based on who you know God to be. At one level that makes us the most vulnerable, and in another level it causes us to enter God's rest and to cease from our strivings.

Think about it this way. You have children. Do your children - when they were young and at home - did they ever have to worry about what they were going to eat? No. Why didn't they? You had it covered. You thought about what they liked to eat when you went to the grocery store, you know, whether it was Frankenberry or Booberry. You knew what they liked. They liked cookies and fries. You knew exactly what your children wanted and that's what you got. You got them some of the good stuff but you also got them some of that and they didn't have to think about it. It just needed to be mealtime and you would take care of them. If we who are evil, if we who are selfish, are like that, what do we think God is like? And He isn't just like that to His children. He lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust. He lets the sun shine on the evil and the good. That's how He is, that's who He is. Do we believe that? Do we believe that? That's the test. The fear of the Lord is that you submit your life to Him, knowing how He is. When you do that there's no end to what He will show you, no end to where He will take you.

I was looking out the windows here on the ocean and sometimes I think about my life. I grew up around the ocean like this in a small place, a very, very small island far, far away from the mainstream of anything. If I had died in my youth, only occasionally would someone even remember my name and I would have been as close to somebody who was one of the nameless faceless masses of people who live and die and nobody has a record or even a memory of. When I think about what God has done with my life-- one small and insignificant life--frankly, I couldn't have hatched a better plan for it. I couldn't have made this life any greater than God has made of it, why would want to think that now I can finish it my way? It's an idiot's dream to say, "I did it my way." It's a fool's

folly to consider that your anthem, when the way of the Lord is so vastly superior to anything you could think of. The fear of the Lord implies just letting Him do it and knowing that He is totally committed to your good.

It took me most of my life to come to the place where I live in the fear of the Lord. I watch people in religion take advantage of the people of God and I think, "How could they do this?" And the answer is: They don't fear God. I watched leaders of whole denominations criminally exploit the most vulnerable members of their 7 Spirits of God - - religions and I think, "How could priests do this to children?" And the answer is: They don't fear God, they don't fear God, but unless they repent they will know the terror of the Lord. I watched on the news episcopals voting in a homosexual bishop and expanding the agenda to include homosexual marriages, and I say, "How could they do this?" The answer is: they have made a God in their own image. They are no longer influenced by the true God. They are just doing what they want to and to this attitude I say, "This is what it means to be a fool." The word says "for a fool says in his heart 'no' to God." It's kind of like: Do you want some water? No water. That's what it means when it says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' Do you want some coffee? No coffee. It's to disavow the relevance of God and to consider the ways of God to be an impediment to what you want to do, to your political agenda. I encourage you to continue to observe the hand of the Lord moving through your life, blessing you, directing you, making you more than you could ever have been, and worshiping God for His steadfast goodness to you. I encourage you to continue to do that, and never again take up the reigns of your own life as if you're going to run it. If you will ask the Lord, moment by moment and day by day, He'll show what to do. It's His pleasure to share His direction with you. Jesus feared God because He only did what He saw the Father doing. That doesn't mean that Jesus was petrified of God. It meant that He understood what it meant to be a living sacrifice, someone who lives but not for his own benefit, but lives for the benefit and the pleasure of another. The fear of the Lord is the foundation of our being. The fear of the Lord is how and it's why we present our bodies as living sacrifices. The payoff is we get to enter God's rest, ceasing from our labors, and entering that which He has already foreordained for us to walk in. Because, the bottom line is, God is not making it up as He goes along in respect to your life or your destiny. He knows you from before you were in your mother's womb and every step He takes with you, every direction He gives you, is consistent with an eternal plan and purpose known to Him before you were born and His greatest glory and your crowning life is to be found foundationed in the fear of the Lord. With the fear of the Lord you will allow the Lord to do through you what He made you for. Through the fear of the Lord you can cease from your striving, through the fear of the Lord you can enter that for which He made you. There is no chance that you could have a greater life than that. And there's no chance that if you go this way that you will not fulfill your destiny and live a memorable life and one that has eternal value. Worship God acceptably with reverence and awe because of His goodness and His mercy to you. And when you worship God acceptably with reverence

and awe, you are displaying the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Amen.