

Walking In The Fear Of God

“Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?” (Neh. 5:9).

When I was a boy, one of our neighbors was Mrs. Edith Pace. Edith was quite a character and I enjoyed every hour I stayed at her house. In fact, sometimes I stayed longer than my allowed time. On those occasions, walking from her house to our house, every step I took was in the fear of Dad and Mom. I not only feared being whipped for my lateness, but I also feared being barred from going back to Mrs. Edith’s.

To walk in the fear of God is certainly to be sensitive to His impending judgment. I am convinced that I would have thought and acted differently in certain situations if my heart had been captured by this special reverence. But there’s more to walking in the fear of God than being concerned about His judgment. It is also realizing that unique privileges could be removed from us because of our indifference.

In an hour when there was a lack of food (see 5:2, 3), the richer people were taking advantage of the poorer by charging high interest rates on loans and making slaves of those who couldn’t pay their loans (see 5:3-5). In the midst of this injustice, Nehemiah denounced the wrong and encouraged the right. “It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God?”

Walking in the fear of God saves us from the revelation of our evil! The Lord had forbidden the Israelites to charge interest to a brother. “If thou lend money to any of My people . . . thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury” (Exo. 22:25). But neither hearing nor fearing Him in this setting, the richer folks followed their own evil inclinations. Only “the fear of the Lord” will cause us “to hate evil” and “the evil way” (Prov. 8:13).

Walking in the fear of God saves us from the reproach of our enemies! The reason Nehemiah questioned the people was that the name and reputation of their God was at stake. Their disobedience was bringing reproach on the God Who had redeemed them from both Egyptian and Babylonian captivity. When the fear of God falls upon our lives, “the name of the Lord Jesus” is “magnified” (Acts 19:17).

Walking in the fear of God saves us from the rebuke of our elders! As God’s man in that hour, Nehemiah was responsible to rebuke those who were doing wrong. He explained, “I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother” (5:7). Thankfully, repentance was evidenced in the camp (see 5:11-13). Walking in the fear of God saves us from disobedience and the need of rebuke and reproof.