**DO YOU FEAR THE LORD?**

What is “fear of the LORD”? According to the Bible, to fear God is to avoid evil. In other words, people who are really “afraid of God” will try to live right. “To fear the LORD is to turn away from evil.” So the definition of “fear of the LORD” is to do what is right.

When I was very young, and I disobeyed my mother, she would say, “Just wait till your daddy gets home.” She was too soft-hearted to spank us. In fact, when Dad spanked us, she would cry. It seemed to hurt her more than it did us. I still remember Dad’s long razor strap. It had two belts, one rough and one smooth leather. It would really sharpen his straight razor. It also “sharpened” us boys! We feared Dad, and so we would really do our best to be good before he came home—in hopes of avoiding punishment. If he punished us, he would grab our arm above the elbow and spank us with the strap. We would run from the strap, around and around him, as he spanked us. He probably didn’t spank us enough. “He who spares the rod hates his son,” the Bible says. “If you beat him with the rod, he will not die; if you beat him with the rod, you will save his soul from hell.” (Proverbs 13:24 and 23:13f) As we grew older, they had other ways to punish us.

The Bible says that fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. It is also the beginning of knowledge. The word “beginning” also means “the chief part.” So fear of the LORD is the most important part of our knowledge and wisdom. It is the beginning point.

Those who do not fear the LORD can still have “wisdom” and “knowledge,” but it will be limited by their ignorance of or rejection of God. The Book of Romans says that “their foolish minds are darkened” and “they have become fools” due to their rejection of God. They may be able to do great things—maybe even put people up in space or on the moon, but their own hearts will not be healed. They are “wise fools.” “Thinking themselves to be wise, they have become fools,” Romans 1 says.

But what about those of us who fear God? We will deal with temptations by focusing *not* on the temptation, but by focusing on God. Martin Luther said, “You can’t stop the birds from flying over your head, but you *can* stop them from building a nest in your hair.” What he meant by that is you can’t stop a thought from entering your mind, but you can stop it from staying there. How? The way to avoid sinning is the focus *not* on the temptation, but to focus on God or his word. When I used to be tempted to get drunk, I memorized Ephesians 5:18-21. “Don’t get drunk with wine…but be filled with the Spirit….” So I would focus on the memorized scripture and not the temptation.

If we focus on the temptation, and keep thinking about it, we will probably sin. But if we focus on God’s promises and on God himself, we will stop thinking about the temptation, and turn from it to God. I Corinthians 10:13 says that every temptation is common to all of us. But “God is faithful, and with the temptation, he will provide a way of escape, so that you can endure it.” Scripture is the way of escape. Notice he does not say, “You be faithful.” Rather, he points to God as the one who provides escape from temptation. He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle.

Fear God. Turn from the temptation to God’s word, and he will help you escape it.