

The Fear of God - Part 1

by Jerry Bridges

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fearing and understanding the holiness and greatness of God, who is transcendent and majestic beyond human comprehension.

Duration: 53:18

Scripture: Psalm 130:3-4, Isaiah 6:1-8, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Fear Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by introducing the topic of the fear of God and the importance of understanding the God whom we are to fear. He reads from Isaiah chapter 6, describing a vision of God seated on a throne, surrounded by seraphim. The preacher emphasizes the infiniteness of God, highlighting that He is without limits. He then moves on to verse 15, where it is stated that the nations are like a drop in a bucket to God, emphasizing His immense power and authority. The sermon concludes by focusing on the holiness of God and the need for moral purity in our lives.

Transcript

Would you turn with me in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 6. As you're turning, let me just express to you my appreciation for the privilege of being here with you this week. As I stood here at the front row and sort of toned down my own singing so that I could hear you, I realized that I was in a group of people who rejoice to fear the Lord, to worship him in the splendor of his holiness as our banner above me suggests. Tomorrow night I'm going to be actually describing what the fear of God is.

After working on this book for some months, I have concluded that the fear of God is a subject that is better described than defined. It's such a broad subject that it's difficult to define it in sort of a one-sentence definition. So I'm going to seek to describe that tomorrow night.

But tonight I want us to begin our series by considering the God whom we are to fear. And so with that in mind, would you follow as I read from Isaiah chapter 6. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings.

With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory. At the sound of their voices, the doorpost and the thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with

smoke.

Woe to me, I cried, I am ruined, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty. Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, See, this has touched your lips.

Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I, send me. Tonight we want to begin our series on the fear of God by considering the holiness of God.

And let me begin by saying that holiness is a much broader subject than we normally think of it. But when we think of holiness, we generally think of moral purity. And there is certainly that dimension of it, because when God said to the nation of Israel, and then again to his church in 1 Peter 1, Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy, certainly he was speaking to that moral dimension, that moral purity.

And yet this is not the basic meaning of the word holy. There's something more fundamental than that, and that is the distinctiveness of God. The Hebrew word for holy is the word Qadosh, Q-A-D-O-S-H.

And the word means cut off or separate. And when it's used of God, it expresses the fact that God is entirely separate from his creation. God is the creator, we are creatures, we are part of his creation.

And obviously the creator cannot be a part of creation, so he is entirely separate from all of his creation. He is the holy other, if you please. He alone is above everything else.

There is no one else that is like God. There is no one to whom we can compare God. He is altogether distinct.

In this sense, we use the word holiness. There are two words that I would suggest to you that describe the holiness of God. And the first word is transcendence.

God is transcendent. And the word transcendent means over and above. He is transcendent over all of his creation.

The second word is the word majesty. And majesty refers to sovereign power and authority and dignity and grandeur and splendor. And when we speak of the majesty of some human potentate, some human king or queen, for example, we're speaking of a relative majesty.

One king might be more powerful than another, and in that sense more majestic. But God is infinitely majestic. He is over and above all of the greatest powers of all of history.

In fact, we're going to see that in a little more descriptive terms in just a few minutes. I would like to take these two words, transcendence and majesty, and bring them together and say that God's holiness is his transcendent majesty. That is, his holiness, his majesty is over and above everything else that we can possibly conceive.

And so the holiness of God is his transcendent majesty, his absolute, his unequaled majesty. And this is what we see portrayed to us here in Isaiah chapter 6, as Isaiah describes this vision which he has. He says, Now there are three descriptive terms here that speak to us of the majesty of God.

First of all, he is seated on a throne. And anyone who is seated on a throne is a king or a queen. The president or the prime minister does not sit on a throne.

A throne has always been reserved for a king or a queen or an emperor, someone who had all of the power. I assume that here in Canada, I know that you have the parliamentary system, but there's sort of the checks and balances like we have in our USA government, of the executive, the legislative, and the judicial, and these sort of form a check upon one another. Just recently, we had the occasion in the United States where our Supreme Court declared that a law that Congress had passed was unconstitutional.

And so we see there the checks and balances in that. And today, of course, we have figurehead kings and queens, but in the old days, the kings and the queens and the emperors had absolute unquestioned authority. They were the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches of government all rolled into one.

There was no Supreme Court to say to a king, this edict that you have just issued is unconstitutional. He is the one who decided that question. He was the sum and substance of government.

What he said was law, and there was no question. And so, Isaiah sees God seated on the throne. And then the term, high and exalted.

Not only is he seated on this throne, but he is high and exalted, and this is a reference, if you please, to his transcendent majesty. And then the train of his robe filled the temple. Now all of you ladies know that when a young lady goes down and buys her wedding gown for that very special day in which she is to be married, and she buys this wedding gown, and it has a train of some length.

And she goes to have her picture made, possibly before the ceremony, and the photographer comes and he takes the train and he moves it around in front of her, even though normally it would trail behind her. But he moves it around in front of her because that train is indicative of the specialness of that gown. And there's a sense in which the longer the train, the more expensive.

And of course, those of you here in Canada that are part of the Commonwealth, and you have the Queen, and you remember that when she had the coronation, and she was installed as the Queen, that she had this very long train, and I believe that it was so long that even there were pageboys that were coming along and sort of carrying that train behind her. And the longer the train, the more indicative it is of the majesty and the dignity of the person. And here we see that God's train fill the temple.

Now it's difficult for us to envision just how that might happen, but we see God seated on the throne, and like the photographer, would take the train of the wedding gown and move it around so that it could be seen in the picture, so God's train comes out and completely fills the floor of the temple. All of these pictures of his throne, the fact that he is high and exalted, that the train of his robe fills the temple, speaks to us of the holiness of God, because it speaks to us of his transcendent majesty. Now, in order for us to actually get more of a picture of this, I'd like for you to turn with me in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 40, and we will see something of the majesty of God in pictorial expression.

It's perhaps a little bit difficult for us to envision what Isaiah saw as he saw God seated on this throne and the train of his robe filling the temple. And so if you'll turn with me to Isaiah chapter 40, the prophet presents to us a series of pictures, of pictorial expressions, of metaphors, if you please, and these are couched, at least some of them, in what the theologians would call anthropomorphic expressions. For

example, some of these speak of God's hand or God's arm.

Now, we know that God does not have a physical body, and so when the Bible speaks of God's hand or God's arm or God's eyes or God's ears, it is what we call an anthropomorphic expression. In other words, it is describing to God the physical characteristics that we have, because even though God does not have those physical characteristics, he does not have a body which limits him, he is spirit. Nevertheless, he is able to do the things which we would do with our ears and our eyes and our tongues and our hands.

And so, in order to show God in action, if you please, the Bible uses these anthropomorphic expressions. With that in mind, let's begin with verse 12. And I'm not going to read through this passage, but rather we're going to look at it a verse or two at a time.

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Now, again, a term, this is a rhetorical or a couple of rhetorical questions. And by rhetorical questions, we simply mean that the answer is obvious. And so God asks, Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? And these two expressions are calculated to show us something of the greatness of God and the ease, the comparative ease, if you please, with which he can do these things.

Now, the first of these figures is God holding the waters or measuring the waters in the hollow of his hand. And if you cup your hand like this, that's the hollow. This is the hollow of the hand.

One day with this passage of scripture in mind, I went to our kitchen and I borrowed one of my wife's measuring spoons and I carefully dipped some water out of a cup and poured it into the hollow of my hand to see how much water I could hold. Now, my hands are not very large. But I determined that I could hold about a tablespoon full of water.

Now, you ladies may have to translate that for your children who are used to, they've learned the metric system. But I'm sure that most of you who are old enough to be cooking are familiar with the tablespoon type of measuring. And I determined that I could hold in the hollow of my hand about a tablespoon full of water.

By contrast, God says that he is so great that he holds the waters of the earth in the hollow of his hand. The encyclopedias tell us that about 71% of the earth's surface is covered with water. I served in the American Navy during the Korean War in the early 1950s and I sailed over a good bit of that water.

And some of that is 5 to 10 miles deep. Out in the middle of the Pacific, it's sometimes 10 miles deep. And we have no idea, there's no way that we could possibly calculate the tremendous volume of water that covers this 71% of the earth's surface.

And yet, God is so great that to him, he could hold those waters in the hollow of his hand if he chose to do that. And secondly, he says, with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens. Now, the breadth of the hand is the distance from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger as your fingers are extended, spread apart like this.

For most people, that's about 9 inches. And yet, God says that he marks off the heavens with the breadth of his hand. Now, we have no idea how far it is across the distance of the known universe.

Scientists are always coming up with different figures on that. We do know, however, that the distance to the nearest star in our galaxy, other than our sun, which itself is a star, but the distance to the nearest star from the earth is four and a half light years away. Now, you recall from your school science that light travels at 186,000 miles per second.

Again, I'm not sure how much that is in kilometers, but it's 186,000 miles per second. And so, the light that we would see at that nearest star, if we could pick out and locate that nearest star, the light that we would see this evening if the clouds were to move away and we were able to see that, would have started from that star four and a half years ago and it would have traveled 26 trillion miles. I did do that in kilometers because that one's a pretty easy one for us to do.

And that's about 42 trillion kilometers. And that's to the nearest star. And yet, God is saying to us that he is so great that he simply marks off the heavens with the span of his hand, with the breadth of his hand.

My wife and I were staying at our son and daughter-in-law's apartment in Dearborn, Michigan over the weekend and my wife wanted to do something for our daughter-in-law and so they were gone and so we got out the tape measure and we measured something. And, you know, as I got out the tape measure, my son's tape measure, I looked and it said it was a 12-foot tape measure. And I thought to myself, this is just a little humorous aside, I thought, when's he going to grow up and get a 25-foot one? I mean, you know, any really true do-it-yourself has got a 25-foot one.

The 12-foot worked. But can you imagine measuring something with nine inches at a time? And God says he marks off the heavens with the span of his hand. Now again, God doesn't have a hand.

He is using this as a pictorial expression to help us to grasp something of his greatness. And what we see here is something of the infiniteness of God. God is infinite.

That is to say, God is entirely without limits. That's what the word infinite means. It is without limit.

Now let's move on down to verse 15. Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket. They are regarded as dust on the scales.

He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. Now the word surely there actually is the word behold. Behold, the nations are like a drop in a bucket.

Really, kind of in contemporary English it would be this. Think of this. Think of this.

The nations are like a drop in a bucket to God. It is nothing. A drop in a bucket is simply nothing.

Some of our translations read a drop from a bucket. That is, on a warm summer day if you fill a pail of water and the condensation on the outside and then pretty soon if you watch you can see a drop of that condensation drop from the rim of the bucket. And some of the translations say that the nations are like a drop dropping from the rim of the bucket.

Others say, as the NIV says, a drop in a bucket. We use that expression. It is sort of a colloquial expression that we use.

It is not even a drop in a bucket. We mean it is nothing. And what God is saying to us here is that He is so great that before Him or in comparison to Him or in His view the nations, all of the nations combined, are no more than simply a drop in a bucket.

It is nothing. It is infinitesimal before God. And then the next expression that He uses is even more so.

He says they are regarded as dust on the scales. Now the scales that the Prophet would have had in mind would be the scales that they used in those days which is similar to laboratory scales that we use. And if you can again remember your science laboratory and you had the scales of the fulcrum, the post in the middle and then the arms coming out and the chains coming down and these little trays and you would put some chemicals or something on one tray and then you would put these little weights, brass weights in the other until you got the thing level and the arrow was pointing straight down or straight up and you determined the weight.

And it is obviously a very accurate way of weighing. Now except in a scientific laboratory we don't use those scales today. That was of course the kind that they used in ordinary commerce in those days.

Now with that in mind He says they are regarded as dust on the scales. In order for us to get an idea of what the Prophet is saying here I'd like for you to set aside the balance scales for a moment and think of the scales at your local supermarket. You know where you go and you're buying a half dozen oranges or a bag of potatoes or something like that and the clerk at the checkout counter puts your oranges on the table of that scale and she or he reads the weight and the cost.

Now think for a moment. You're going through the line here and it's your turn and the clerk is about to weigh your half dozen oranges. And you say, oh wait a minute, before you weigh those oranges would you dust off the table of the scale because I don't want to pay for the dust.

Well he'd probably call for the men in the white coats, would he not? I mean it would be absurd, it would be ridiculous. Because what little dust there is on that scale is totally meaningless. It's essentially weightless.

And yet God is so great that in His sight and in comparison to Him all of the nations of the world are like that little bit of dust on the scale at your supermarket. Now the intent here is not to show how insignificant the nations are in themselves but how insignificant they are in comparison to God and before God. Think of all of the great empires.

And we can go back to the Assyrian Empire and the Babylonian Empire and the Medo-Persian Empire and the Grecian Empire and the Roman Empire and coming on down the British Empire with which you are very familiar. Back in the days when it was said that the sun never sets on the British Empire. Or the great superpowers of the late 20th century.

There was Germany and then there was the Soviet Union and then the United States is considered a superpower. I'm not sure why but at least it's put in that category. And God is saying you can take all of these empires, all of these nations and lump them all together.

Not just one by one but the sum total of all of them together and before God and in comparison to God. They're no more than just a little bit of dust on the scale at your supermarket. Verse 17.

The comparison with the nations is intensified. Look at the words he uses. Before him all the nations are as nothing.

They're regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing. Notice those three terms. Nothing, worthless, less than nothing.

Essentially these are words of contempt. To be nothing is non-existent. To be worthless means to be empty of meaning or purpose.

And then to make sure that we really understand what he's saying, he says less than nothing. Now logically, well that is an illogical expression. You know there cannot be anything less than nothing.

But God uses this superlative term less than nothing again to show his greatness. And just think for a moment of all the sum total of all of the great empires of all of history and lump them all together. And then to remember that God is so great that before him all of these empires are empty of meaning and less than nothing.

Verses 25 to 26. To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal, says the Holy One? Lift your eyes and look to the heavens. Who created all these? He brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Now in the days when these words were written, of course a person would look up into the sky as you and I would today without the aid of a powerful telescope. And we would see a certain number of stars in the sky.

Now that scientists have been able with their radio telescopes and now the Hubble telescope to see farther out into space, they see that there are vastly many, many, many more stars than we had ever envisioned. Several years ago I discovered that a seat mate of mine on an airplane flight from Washington D.C. to Denver was an astrophysicist, an astronomer if you please, at one of the universities in California. And with this passage of scripture in my mind I asked him this question.

How many stars do astronomers think are out there? And he said, and this was before the days of the Hubble telescope by the way, and he said, well in round numbers and an easy to remember figure, think of it like this. He said there are about a hundred billion, that's not million, a billion, a hundred billion, not stars, but galaxies. A hundred billion galaxies.

Each galaxy contains about a hundred billion stars. Now give or take a few billion there. But he was giving round numbers.

He said this is the way you can kind of easily remember it. A hundred billion galaxies and each galaxy contains about a hundred billion stars. And God calls them each by name.

Now there are about six billion people, not quite six billion people in the world today and many of us have the same name. And I don't know how many different names, but in a family you would never have two people with the same name. Even if you've got a dozen or fifteen kids, you're not going to have two Jerry's in the same family.

It would be too confusing, would it not? And all of these stars are in God's family. It's not, you know, this name and this name, you know, this name over here and again I repeat it over here. But God's got a different name.

Now the astronomers assign numbers. You know, this galaxy is R434. We assign a few names.

We use the name of Polaris and Orion and Milky Way. But God names them all. You see, because God's mind is infinite.

And not only does he name them all, but it says because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. That is, by God's power, every one of those hundred billion times a hundred billion stars move in their respective courses. Tonight as I was walking up the road here, I saw a toy that I have not seen in years.

A yo-yo. A man, you know what a yo-yo is? I mean, all of you adults know what a yo-yo is. Explain to your children what a yo-yo is.

But this man had this yo-yo. And I said, I haven't seen one of those in years. Now, he can keep that yo-yo moving up and down on the string, and I didn't watch him, but probably he can get it to spin at the bottom, you know, like we used to do on those things, or maybe even throw it out like that, and so forth.

And all of the tricks that we learn to do as kids with yo-yos. He can do that with one yo-yo. I suppose that a person, if he really worked at it, could be ambidextrous and could have a yo-yo in both hands, and one is coming up while the other one is going down, or something like that.

But that would be the maximum. He couldn't have a yo-yo in each finger, and so, you know, normally a person would have this one yo-yo that it keeps in its courses. He might, if he's really worked at it, you know, and has, you know, some kind of an act that he's putting on.

Maybe he, I remember when the representative of the yo-yo company used to come to our school and he could do all these tricks. And so he might have one in each hand. God keeps a hundred million times a hundred million stars in their courses.

And he doesn't have them attached by strings. He holds them out there by his mighty power. This is the infinite God that we see.

This is what we mean when we speak of the holiness of God, his transcendent majesty, his infinite greatness, that there's a total discontinuity between God and ourselves, granted that we are created in his image, but we're still creatures. He is self-sufficient. We're dependent.

He is eternal. We're mortal. Now with that in mind, I would like for you to turn back with me to Isaiah chapter 6. What Isaiah saw as he saw this vision of God in the temple was this infinitely holy God.

And Isaiah was overcome because he was able to see something of this infiniteness of God that we have just looked at with these various expressions, these various comparisons in Isaiah chapter 40. And so when it says that he saw God high and exalted and is the train of his robe filling the temple, this is the kind of vision that Isaiah saw. And this is why that Isaiah was overcome.

Because he sees God first of all in his transcendent majesty. We're going to find out tomorrow night that the fear of God consists in this kind of a vision of God. But Isaiah not only saw God in his transcendent majesty, but he also saw God in his infinite moral purity, his infinite moral excellence, if you please.

Now remember, what we saw in Isaiah 40 are pictures of infiniteness. You know, a hundred billion times a hundred billion stars out there suggest to us that it's infinite. And if it were a thousand billion times a thousand billion, it still would be, we would be seeing, as it says in Job, only the fringes, only the hem of his garment.

And however far across the distance of the universe from edge to edge it is, if it were twice or ten times that far, God would still mark it off with the breadth of his hand. If there were ten times the volume of water, God would still hold it in the hollow of his hand because he's infinite. You know, we use the word infinite and it really doesn't mean much to us.

We say, well, yeah, without limits. But what we have seen here in Isaiah chapter 40 is what that begins to mean. Now, consider this.

God is infinite in the moral dimension of his holiness. God is infinitely pure. Down in the states, the manufacturers of ivory soap used to have a slogan, 99 and 44 one hundredths percent pure.

And apparently that's quite an accomplishment in the manufacturing of soap because they used that as a slogan. 99 and 44 one hundredths percent pure. That means that they have managed to extract almost all the impurities out of it.

Suppose that tonight I were to say to you that God is 99 and 44 one hundredths percent morally pure. That would be blasphemy. God is not almost a hundred percent.

God is not even a hundred percent. God is infinitely morally pure. And it is this moral purity that caused Isaiah to cry, woe is me.

It was the awareness of God's moral purity that caused Isaiah's deep cry of dismay. It was not just the consciousness of his humanness in the presence of deity, but it was rather the consciousness of his sinfulness in the presence of God's holiness. And so he cries out, woe to me.

I am ruined for I am a man of unclean lips. And I live among a people of unclean lips. Isaiah was uniquely the prophet of woe.

I counted once and I think there are 38 different times in the book of Isaiah that Isaiah uses the word woe. And it is usually woe to the nation. In fact in the fifth chapter, the chapter just prior to this, he says woe to the nation about five or six times there.

And yet here he says woe is me. Now Isaiah was a righteous man. As we would have looked at him, we would have said there goes a righteous man, there goes a godly man.

And yet when Isaiah sees God and he instinctively sees himself relative to God, he cries out, woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips. The word unclean which he uses here is the word which was required of lepers.

When it was determined that a person had leprosy, as they would walk down the street or the path, they would have to cry out unclean, unclean, unclean. And this is the word that Isaiah uses. I am a man of unclean lips.

He uses it again in Isaiah 64.6. You remember when he says all of us have become like one who is unclean, like one who is filthy in the sight of God. And Isaiah was completely devastated. Now I am not sure why he speaks of his lips being unclean.

I think there are two possibilities. One possibility that some of the commentators have is as he saw these seraphs crying out, holy, holy, holy, and he realized his own uncleanness and the uncleanness of his lips, he realized that he was not fit, he was not qualified as it were to join in this worship and this praise of this thrice holy God. I suggest to you that perhaps there is another reason.

You see Isaiah was a prophet. His lips were as it were his professional instrument. A surgeon has his surgical instruments.

Isaiah's instrument was his lips. He was a spokesman for God. And here this man who has been a spokesman for God, probably this occurred very early in his prophetic career if you please, and here this man who is the spokesman for God all of a sudden discovers that his lips are unclean in the sight of God.

It would be like the surgeon in the operating room and he is about to begin this very delicate surgery and he looks at his hands and they are filthy. He looks at his instruments and they have not been sterilized. He says, I can't do it.

I can't proceed. We've got to stop. We've got to put a hold on everything.

I've got to scrub my hands. We've got to sterilize these instruments. We can't possibly proceed with this.

And Isaiah is brought to a halt. He can no longer proceed. He says, woe is me.

I'm a man of unclean lips. And then one of the seraphs in verse 6, flew to me with a live coal in his hand which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, see this has touched your lips.

Your guilt has taken away and your sin atoned for. The surgeon can scrub his hands. He can send the instruments back to the sterilization, whatever it is that they use to sterilize the instruments.

But who can cleanse Isaiah's lips? Only God can cleanse Isaiah's lips. And he does this by saying to him, your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. Now let's consider for a moment, how could God do this? How could God just arbitrarily say, okay, your sin is forgiven.

God could only do this as his justice is satisfied. We have in the states, and I think you have a similar thing here in Canada, where a provincial governor or the prime minister or somebody can issue an executive pardon to someone who has been convicted of a crime. And in the United States, the governor in the state has absolute authority on that.

He cannot be contrabanded in this. Now we have had in the city of Colorado Springs where Jane and I live, a couple of very dramatic, heinous murders this year. Random murders.

And the populace of our area is incensed at this. Now suppose that the young men who perpetrated these very heinous crimes were convicted and the governor were to issue them a pardon. What would be the reaction in the state, in the community? There would be this tremendous cry of outrage because justice would have been subverted.

We want to see justice done. We want to see this man who has committed this heinous crime get his just deserts. If the governor issues a pardon, we say he subverted justice.

God never subverts his justice. God never issues an executive pardon without justice having been satisfied. How is God's justice satisfied? God knew that as we reckon time, that 700 years after Isaiah wrote these words, that God's own son would die on the cross.

In fact, Isaiah himself had the privilege of prophesying about that when he said in that beautiful 53rd chapter, All we like sheep have gone astray, we've turned every man to his own way, and the Lord has

laid on him the iniquity of us all. And God knew that in 700 years as we reckon time, and God of course is outside of time, but as we reckon time, God knew that his son would pay for Isaiah's sins. And God's justice would be satisfied.

And God's law would be magnified. And it was upon that basis of the cross that was to come, that God could say to Isaiah, Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. And so we see that this God who is infinite in his holiness, is bountiful in his grace and his mercy.

And this also we're going to find out tomorrow night. The realization of that is a part of the fear of God. For the psalmist says in Psalm 130, If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand? There is the awareness of God's holiness and God's justice.

But then he goes on to say, But with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared. We fear God not only for his holiness and his righteousness and his justice, but we fear God for his grace and his mercy and his compassion. And so we see here tonight this infinite holy God.

Infinite in his greatness, holding the waters, if he chose, in the hollow of his hand, marking off the heavens by the breadth of his hand, the nations not even like the dust on the scales, the stars that he holds in their courses simply by his infinite mighty power. And this same God, who is infinite in his holiness, says to you and me, through Jesus Christ, If you trust in him, your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for. Your sin is forgiven.

And then we come to the application. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I, send me. Now if Isaiah had heard those words just a few minutes before, if Isaiah had heard those words before he heard, Your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for, if he had heard God say, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? And Isaiah would have thought to himself, Not me by any means.

I'm totally unqualified. My lips are unclean. How could I possibly speak in behalf of this infinitely holy God? But now that his lips have been cleansed, and he hears these words, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? And he responds, Here am I, Lord.

Send me. I once heard R.C. Sproul of Ligonier Ministries say, and actually he was quoting his mentor from Holland, said that the essence of biblical theology is grace. When you sum it all up, it's grace.

And the essence of morality is gratitude. In other words, gratitude for God's grace. I heard him say that, and I thought, well yeah, that's right.

But as I began to think about it, I thought, but there's more to it than that. Because before the grace, there has to be guilt. You see, grace by definition assumes guilt.

Grace is only for people who are guilty.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/12/SID12996.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jerry-bridges/the-fear-of-god-part-1/>

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