

Week 4 - (5:11) “we know what it is to fear the lord...we try to persuade men”

“Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.

“Fear of the Lord”

Key question: What does Paul mean by the phrase “fear the Lord” in this context

Word Meaning(s)

Grammar

- Words are imprecise in their meanings...if you imagine all of the meanings that are possible being represented as a map...the meaning of a word would be equivalent to a small country or an island.
- **Εἰδότες οὖν τὸν φόβον τοῦ κυρίου** = “**therefore knowing the fear of the Lord**”
- “knowing” = adjectival participle modifying the noun “the fear of the Lord.” “the Lord” is in the genitive case...thus modifying the main noun “the fear.” “the fear” here is taken as a noun with implicit action (verbal noun) and the genitive “the Lord” is taken as the objective genitive → “Since we fear the Lord”

Word Meanings (φόβον)

- The noun is translated “fear” but the ancient meaning is “respect”
- Fear of God, most often means, reverent and submissive recognition in trust and obedience. The idea excludes the idea of punishment because the “fear of the lord” incorporates observance of the Lord’s will. E.g. sinners do not fear God...which is evident in the fact that they do not honor God’s will.
- See Ps 22:22f; Ps 147:11; Ps 66:16; Deut 4:10; 8:6
- Fear of the Lord is an essential aspect of faith and trust, and differs from anxiety over uncertain results/judgments.

Context

- (1:3f) “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”
- (1:9f) “...that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead....on him we have set our hope”
- (1:12f) “...we have conducted ourselves in the world...in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God’s grace.”
- (1:14) “...just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus. Because I was confident of this....”
- (2:14f) “...but thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ...”
- (3:5) “...but our competence comes from God. He made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”
- (3:17) “...Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”
- (4:1f) “Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; ***we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.*** On the contrary, by ***setting forth the truth plainly*** we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience ***in the sight of God.***”

2010 Cycle 2 – “Love Compels Us”

- (4:13f) It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." {[13] Psalm 116:10} With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.”
- (5:1ff) “we know...guaranteeing what is to come...always confident...so we make it our goal to please him
- (5:14f) “For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.”

Summary

“Knowing the fear of the Lord” → because we respect Christ, and are confident of his promise of an eternal dwelling, we work hard in the ministry he has given us.

Discussion

- What is the difference between “being fearful of God” and “respecting God”?
- How does this affect our efforts to “persuade men”?
- Given the context, what are we trying to “persuade men” about?
- What is communicated with the word “knowing” in this verse?
- How does a person come to “know the fear of the Lord,” i.e. come to be confident in the Lord and respect him.
- How does this verse fit into Paul’s overall argument in 2 Corinthians?
- What cultural situations flavor and color Paul’s response to the Corinthians?
- What might our efforts to “try to persuade men” look like in our culture and setting?