



The Kingdom Perspective

Chesterton on the Fear of God

Hello, this is Pastor Don of Christ Redeemer Church. Welcome to The Kingdom Perspective.

Fear is a mutually exclusive principle. The degree to which you fear one thing is the degree to which you will not fear another. In other words, you may be fearful of being late for an important appointment, but you are more fearful of getting a ticket. And so, you don't speed...or at least not too much. A teenage boy may be fearful of jumping off a river bridge with his buddies, but he is more fearful of being perceived as a coward. And so, he jumps into the river. A college student may be fearful of getting a low grade, but she is more fearful of getting expelled from school for cheating. And so, she plays by the rules, taking the C grade instead of risking her college career to get an A. You may be fearful of a bad outcome for your child, but you are more fearful of them never learning to take responsibility for themselves. And so, you step back and let them face the consequences. Someone else may be fearful of being lonely and isolated, but they have a greater fear of engaging in public. And so, they isolate more and more until they become a total recluse. You get the point. Fear is a mutually exclusive principle.

That means that the best way to combat fear is not by stopping your fear, but by redirecting your fear to something and someone else. One fear drives out another. And the fear you fixate on the most will control the outcome of your life.

The English writer and thinker, G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) nails this principle, as it relates our relationship with God.

"We fear men so much, because we fear God so little. One fear cures another. When man's terror scares you, turn your thoughts to the wrath of God." (G.K. Chesterton)

As you can see, Chesterton had a way of cutting to the heart of the matter! The fear of God doesn't ruin your life, rather it keeps you from falling prey to a thousand little lesser fears.

Something to think about from The Kingdom Perspective.

"He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name!
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.
His praise endures forever!"

~ Psalm 111:9-10 (ESV)

References: G. K. Chesterton, quoted in Martin H. Manser's *The Westminster Collection of Christian Quotations* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 109.

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