



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH
FAIR OAKS RANCH

Day 4: To Fear the Lord Is to Hate Evil

Proverbs 8:13 *The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.* (ESV)

DEVOTIONAL

The fear of the Lord is usually defined by what it produces: wisdom, obedience, reverence, etc. But here Wisdom gives us a definition by way of a strong, unmistakable word: hatred. "The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil." If you want to measure how deeply you revere God, don't only measure how much you love what is good; measure how much you have come to hate what He hates. Before we treat this verse like a club; we should first see it as a mirror. This is about 'hating' the sin that exists in our *own lives* long before we consider the sin that may exist in another's (Matthew 7:3-5).

Hatred is the Hebrew word *sane'*, and it is not timid. It does not mean tolerance, or disapproval; but a convicted, whole-souled aversion. This cuts against culture that prizes being non-judgmental above nearly every virtue, and that has taught us to minimize sin, to laugh along with it on the screen and ignore it in ourselves. But a heart that truly fears God develops a genuine distaste for the things that grieve Him. Reverence for a holy God and affection for evil cannot occupy the same heart at once (James 4:4).

Hatred as a mere feeling is not holiness. The Proverbs finishes this thought in chapter 16:6 by stating "by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil" (Proverbs 16:6). The Hebrew here is *sur* — to turn aside, to depart, to remove oneself. It is a word about the feet, not merely the heart. The fear of the Lord does not simply change how we think; it changes where we walk. So the searching question is not only *do I disapprove of this sin*, but *have I actually departed from it?* Sadly, we often sincerely hate our sin but we have seldom actually walk away from them.

Do not miss the grace in the first half of Proverbs 16:6 "By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil." Atonement comes first. We do not turn away from evil in order to earn God's mercy; His mercy is what frees us and draws us to turn. This is what keeps the pursuit of purity from devolving into mere moralism. Turning is the evidence of being forgiven, never the price of it.

Notice, also, where Wisdom aims first: not at the scandalous sins we love to condemn in others, but at our own pride and arrogance. The fear of the Lord begins its work in the "respectable corners" of self-importance, the need to be right, and quiet contempt for others. The Puritan John Owen once said, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you." There is no neutral ground. What we will not learn to hate in our own lives, we will eventually learn to love.

Hear this rightly. The person who hates evil most is not the one pointing a finger at the world, but the one on his knees, grieved most of all by the sin in his own heart, and then rising to walk away from it.

TAKE AWAY

Hating a sin you've never walked away from is not the fear of the Lord. Reverence doesn't just change what you love; it changes the direction of your life. What have you disapproved of for years but never actually departed from?

PRAYER PROMPT

Ask God to turn your hatred of one tolerated sin into an actual departure from it today, resting in the mercy that makes the turning possible.