22 March 2020
Private Circulation Only

SOVEREIGN HOPE
bible presbyterian church

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The Fear of God vs the Phobia of a Pandemic

How can a Christian grow in the fear of God in an atmosphere of great phobia and widespread anxiety? There are many phobias or irrational fears that people struggle with and the deadly spread of the COVID19 virus is now one of them. The author once read a list of about 90 fears that includes *Claustrophobia* (fear of confined places), *Phobophobia* (fear of fear), *Acrophobia* (fear of height), *Hydrophobia* (fear of water), *Necrophobia* (fear of the dead), *Brontophobia* (fear of thunder), *Xenophobia* (fear of strangers), *Ailurophobia* (fear of flowers), *Nyctophobia*(fear of night), *Gerascophobia* (fear of getting old), *Microphobia* (fear of germs or small things), *Pyrophobia* (fear of fire), *Amathophobia* (fear of dust) and many others. Psychiatrists are seeing more cases of these phobias in anxiety disorders and obsessive compulsive behaviours in Singapore today in our mental clinics.

The fear of being very sick is real and many are afraid that they may catch the virus. Is there a way to calm our greatest fears? Do we need to learn to fear God that will overcome all other fears? Solomon says in Prov 9:10 and also in Psalm 111:10, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."* The reverential fear of the Lord is the starting point of all practical wisdom according to an inspired ancient wise king. We need to be prudent to take all the necessary precautions to protect ourselves, our families and the community, minus the irrational trepidation that leads us to do unnecessary actions or even to spread phobia to others. Be an encouragement to souls and lead them to trust in Christ, our only sure Refuge in the time of a deadly storm

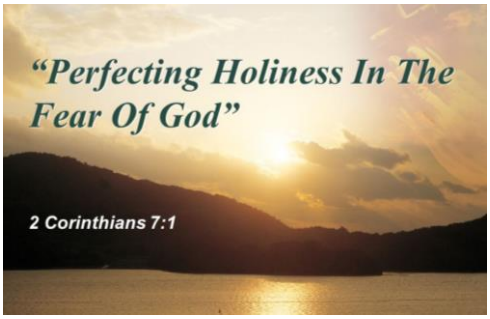
The Nature of the Fear of God

Far from being negative and limiting, the fear of God is healthy and clean (Ps 19:9). It is the very basis of a proper relationship with our God. Joshua told the people in Joshua 24:14, *"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD."* Solomon advised in Proverbs 8:13, *"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."* This fear is not in the ungodly. Romans 3:18 says, *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Frequently in the Bible, the fear of the Lord is contrasted with the worship of idols. From Deuteronomy 6:13–14, *"Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you."* The people were to respect and fear God as they served Him rather than be obsessed with idolatry of other false gods. The author of Hebrews says, in Hebrews 12:28–29, *"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."* The fear of God affects our worship of God and stewardship of what we have. Samuel says in 1 Samuel 12:24, *"Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you."*

The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him (Ps 147:11). Solomon assured us that it will be well with those who fear God (Eccl 8:12) and not with those who do not. Cornelius feared God, with his whole family, and he was saved (Acts 10:1); and the Hebrew midwives who feared God rather than Pharaoh and refused to kill the newborn baby boys experienced God's blessings themselves (Exod 1:15–21) for their obedience. The fear of God led them to do the right things. Isaiah the prophet in Isa 50 :10 gives us the Heavenly response. It begins with the fear of God, not the irrational phobia of things, events, the unknown or even a fast spreading deadly virus and it ends with the words, "**trust**" and "**stay upon**" (focus and fixation in the midst of distraction) **his God**. Who are you "staying on" today in the midst of this global threat and dreadful epidemic? Is your life rooted on the right everlasting foundation today? Something to think about seriously

The Practice of Fearing God



Fear became a prevalent bad word especially so after Sep 11 of 2001. The word terror and phobia became the order of the day for many in the 21st century. But those who fear God will be filled with great comfort and joy, and they will also flee from sin and grow in holiness and righteousness. 2 Cor 7:1 says, *"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,* ***perfecting holiness in the fear of God****."* There is a desire to please, obey and honour God, and growth in sanctification is the result of a God-fearing man. Exercise unto godliness (1Tim 4;7,8) and evangelical repentance are marks of someone who is truly saved and who has a reverential awe and respect to God.

Those who fear God are humble and they have no problem with submission to spiritual leadership. Ephesians 5:21 says, *"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."* A lot of problems are caused by pride and a lack of fear for God and respect for the holy and indestructible Word of God. There is much comfort and hope and joy for those who trust In the Lord God and fear His name for they are under the everlasting arms of God (Deut 33:27). The fear of God causes us to hate or evil and to keep away from all sinful ways (Job1;1, Prov 8:13 and 2 Cor 7:1). The fear of God is clean, enlightening our eyes, making us wise and enduring forever (Psa 19). The ultimate end of COVID19 is death (which is rare) and we have One who is triumphant over the grave and hell. The fear of death should drive us to seek Christ, the only Victor over the grave and our depravity and who can give us eternal life. (1Cor 15:57)

The Disposition of Those Who Fear God

Those who fear God will live their lives carefully and respectably keeping the commandments of God and be separate from the world (2 Cor 7:1). 1 Pet 1:17 says, *"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."* Solomon concludes his book of prudent advice to us in Ecclesiastes 12:13–14,

> *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

Those who fear God are conscious of their accountability to God and so they order their lives befitting of their calling and walk worthily before the Lord. We are soberly reminded that God is a sovereign Judge and will assess us one day before the judgment seat of Christ when eternal reward will be given out to the faithful and deserving stewards (2Cor 5:10). They will fight against the world depravity and seek to worship, serve and seek God in much fervent prayers and intercessions.

In 1 Kings 18:3,4,12, Obadiah feared the Lord greatly and therefore he took the risk and hid the prophets of God and provided food for a hundred of them in two caves. His fear of God led them to serve God with courage and strength, and God rewarded him. A healthy fear for God will give us the courage to do the right things for him to the benefit of others as well. There are many benefits of fearing God which includes keeping us from harm and danger when we are in the way of the Lord. Do we guide our children to cultivate a healthy reverential awe for God? This is reflected in the manner we worship Him, read His Word, to pray together often, to think deeply about God. These will also affect us in our testimony in the workplace or place of study and our entire being for the Glory of God.

Those who fear God will strive to be patient and they wait upon the Lord for His perfect timing. (Isa 40:31) David feared God and did not take Saul's life into his hands (1 Sam 24:4–6). We are to walk daily in the fear of God (Col 3:22) and recognising that God alone is sovereign over all things. The believer's fear of God is not a negative morbid phobia but a practical and reverential one before the Almighty God, that affects our behaviour and conduct before Him and others. Cultivate the fear of God and grow in this vital aspect of Christian living. Learn to be like Abraham, Job, Cornelius and the saints of God who had a fear of God and hence served Him faithfully and reverentially. The people, during the time of the Judges, were godless and had no fear for God and God sent judges to rule over them. We must learn to grow in the fear and reverence of the Lord. Psa 128:1 says, *"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways"* and Isa 50:10 says, *"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."* The knowledge of God's Word and His character and the constant awareness of His presence and power will help us in the daily application of the fear of God.

Conclusion

We live in a current fearful world that is filled with much terror and trepidation as we face a deadly pandemic that has spread to over 155 countries. There is a place for proportionate fear which can lead to prudent action in taking the right precautions. But for extreme irrational fear is not for us as we have an Almighty God whom we trust and depend upon. We are to fear the only Living and True God. Fear God and obey His will and His Word; and we will have nothing to fear. Our whole duty is to fear God and keep his commandments according to Solomon and that is our chief end in life. It is a joy and privilege to know the Almighty God and to love and fear Him in life. Let us be enthused to do just that as we await patiently the deliverance from this health crisis and be vigilant and ready for the Lord's soon return and the coming judgement of the world.

Jack Sin

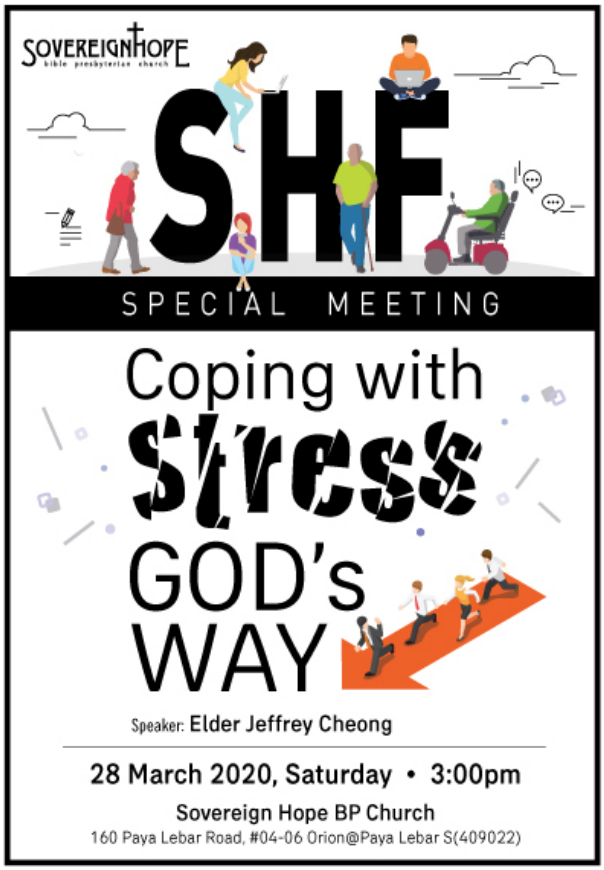
Our Weekly Wed Church Prayer Meeting on 18 Mar 2020 with Rev Peter Goh sharing a devotion from Ezra 8:21 – 36.

Let us Come and Pray as a Church!

Celebrating Dn Yue Kay's birthday on last Sunday15 Mar!

A fruitful discussion on practical evangelism in smaller groups led by Bro Paul Kong.

Kam Weng leading us in some interactive games during the SHF meeting.



Greetings from Indonesia

Thanks for sharing the Christian Perspective of the COVID 19.

I thank God for Covid 19. It really brought many to Christ through preaching the Gospel. To the Batak pastors from Batak Traditional churches, Covid 19 helps them to realize that evangelism is not 'building churches' but souls winning.

To the Bataks, church building is so sacral and a holy place that if you don't go to church on Sunday, you cannot go to Heaven. Long ago, the Jews only worshiped the Lord in Jerusalem. But Jesus announced that we can worship the Lord anywhere in spirit and in truth. Now with the Covid 19, we are encouraged to even worship in houses with the help of industrial revolution 4.0.

To the Bataks, bringing laptop to the pulpit is against the holiness of God. Having slides during worship is not holy. Now that the Bataks have to thank God for IT. Covid 19 has change many pastors' mindsets about church and about IT in church.

Many good things happening in Batak churches because of Covid 19. Puji Tuhan!

Sis Roska
BPC of Pekanbaru, Indonesia

(NB. Sis Roska and other Indonesian BP leaders and pastors received the SHBPC weekly article dated 23 Feb 2020 on the COVID19 in Bahasa Indonesian translated by Rev Arianto. Pray for her as she serves the Lord in Pekanbaru and other preachers during this health crisis. A Vietnamese and Kannada version will be ready soon.)

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Memory Verse

Joshua 23:11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.

Announcements

1. Rev Peter Goh speaks today on "The Old Soldier Prepares to Break Camp" (Joshua 23:1-16)
2. Rev Jack Sin speaks next Sunday on "Final Charge from a Veteran Servant of God" (Joshua 24:1-24)
3. Prayer meeting continues on Wed at 8pm at the home sister Han Kin Kheng.
4. The Christian Perspective of the COVID 19 virus article is being translated into 7 languages (ie Chinese, Tamil, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Spanish, Kannada, Khmer). Those who are interested may request from Pastor.
5. Those who would like to serve the Lord in any area in the church, please see the Pastor or the Deacons.
6. Those who have a testimony to share may submit to Pastor for the weekly.