

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

Do you have any regrets? I do, now. One of my sons is at Martin Luther College studying to become a teacher in our synod. For four years I wanted to introduce him to Frank and let them talk for a couple hours. Sometimes the ministry can be tough and I wanted him to listen to Frank and hear his pleasant, gospel-centered attitude on everything, especially the ministry. Talking to Frank is like reading the book of Philippians. We don't nickname that book "finding joy in every circumstance" for nothing. When you read it, you would never think that Paul was unjustly imprisoned by Rome and the verdict may demand death. You would never have known he was once stoned and left for dead, whipped numerous times, was beaten, stalked and yelled at, or had power hungry false teachers calling him names. That is because Paul found joy even in the worse of times. **"Rejoice always,"** he encouraged. **"I will say it again. Rejoice."**

I suppose some psychologist has some fancy label to describe Frank. I suppose some personality test has a name for this positive attitude. But you and I know why Frank was always positive. He loved his Lord who first loved him. That is why I want to share with you Frank's confirmation verse. **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding."** Frank feared, loved and trusted his Lord, and it made him the way he is.

Yes, I regret not having my son talk with Frank. Then again, my son is studying the Bible at school, and what motivated Frank is right there in the Bible. Allow me now to go into all ten verses of Psalm 111 so we can see what wisdom the fear of the Lord gives. We first are wise about all the great things the Lord does.

I. The great things the Lord does.

"Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate. He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever. He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations." Because of God's Word, Frank was a wise man, and he shared that wisdom with anyone he met. Frank did not shy away from describing the beauty and wonders of God's creation. He shared the great things God has done whether the Ten Plagues to the Red Sea, from Jesus raising Jairus' daughter from death to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He never took for granted the little things the Lord has done. He relished any day God gave him even if it was filled with trouble. Even when he complained, he used that as an opportunity to highlight the great things God does. He would tell me about the cancer and how hard it was to exert himself, but he never ended that complaint with a period. He used a comma and said, "but." "But the Lord is so good to me."

That is why he became a teacher. He wanted to teach about the great things the Lord has and is and will do. But he didn't do that just in the school. Look at this family. He continued to share the wisdom of God's Word to you and we see that today. With the organ he accompanied hymns so people can sing of God's deeds. He directed the choir so they can proclaim God's marvelous deeds to the congregation. He shared it outside of church. Everyone knew him as one who feared and loved and trusted the Lord. Frank's joy was contagious.

Frank's fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom, or better, its foundation or basis for his wisdom. He let God and his Word formulate what he thought, said, did. He saw people as God saw them, as redeemed children of God. He saw sinners needing a Savior. He treated his family as God would treat them. He did because of God's Word.

II. The Scriptures make us wise.

Verses 8-10: **"The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness. He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever—holy and awesome is his name."**

I like to read history. I recently read one book that was the second or third revised edition. The admits he discovered new information and felt compelled to make changes to his book. He even thought about changing the title.

Frank was wise because he had a source of information that was absolutely true and did not need updating. Sure the Bible has undergone hundreds of editions. But this wasn't because the Bible is changing or there are new discoveries. It is because so many copies are being sold each year. God's Word is trustworthy. God's Word stands forever and ever. It is without error.

This Word sheds light on so many things. In its mysteries are revealed. A meteorologist sees cloud formations and devises a forecast of rain or snow. Because of God's Word we see the Lord sending rain so the crop grows giving food to us. The world is perplexed over why people don't get along. The Bible shows us the corruption of sin. The world views things as events. The Bible shows us a grand plan of salvation unfolding.

And there is the greatest treasure revealed there that no mind conceived or imagined. **"He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever—holy and awesome is his name."** Many years ago we had a garage sale. You know the rule. If you are willing to sell it, then don't take it back into the house. So anything we did not sell, we would pack up and send to the thrift store. We had a number of old baseball mitts out there that my son had over the years. One was his very first tee ball mitt. We put the mitt in the sale because he couldn't use it anymore. It wouldn't fit his hand. He couldn't field

grounders with it. What good was it? When he saw that mitt on the table, he wanted to keep it. I jokingly said it was a dollar. A moment later he brought a dollar and bought that mitt.

As sinners we don't fit with God in any way. He doesn't need us and as sinners we certainly didn't want him. Rather, we should be thrown away, and not just in death which is the wage of sin, but the second, eternal death. But God sees us and wants us so much he is willing to pay a price for us. He redeemed us, he bought us back, only it wasn't with a dollar. He traded Jesus for us, his innocent son for sinners like you and me and covered us with Jesus' holiness and righteousness. That is why Frank was so positive. He knew he couldn't do anything to get into heaven. But he also knew he didn't commit a sin so grievous that would keep him out of heaven. The blood of Christ washes all sins away.

As a result, we will never be separated from God again. "**...he ordained his covenant forever**" Forever. Not for a year. Not for a lifetime. Forever. This morning we had a baptism and on the wall is the banner we hang for such occasions. On May 14, 1933 Frank was baptized. In Baptism God made a promise to Frank, and God is keeping promise. Not even death can break God's promise for Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection; He rose and we will rise. What is sown in dishonor and perishable will be raised in honor and imperishable.

It is no wonder why Frank was so kind and positive. He feared, loved, and trusted his Lord, and it showed even when he had cancer. May such wisdom bless you now and forever. Amen.