

THE FEAR OF THE LORD PART IX: THE PRIVILEGES OF THE ONE WHO FEARS THE LORD
Psalms 34:6-11

(NLT) "In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened; He saved me from all my troubles. ⁷ For the Angel of the LORD is a guard; He surrounds and defends all who fear Him. ⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in Him! ⁹ Fear the LORD, you His godly people, for those who fear Him will have all they need. ¹⁰ Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the LORD will lack no good thing. ¹¹ Come, my children, and listen to me, and I will teach you to fear the LORD."

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been controlled by any kind of phobia? A "phobia" is "a persistent, *irrational* fear of a specific object, activity, or situation that produces a compelling desire to avoid it." There are at least 530 officially recognized phobias. Some are familiar, as *claustrophobia*, fear of confined spaces; *arachnophobia*, fear of spiders, and *testophobia*, fear of taking tests. Have you heard of *lachanophobia*—fear of vegetables, *novercaphobia*—fear of your stepmother /mother-in-law, or *ophthalmophobia*—fear of being stared at? There's even an *ecclesiophobia*—fear of church. Is it good to be controlled by a phobia, by an *irrational* fear? No. But there is a *rational* fear that is extremely good when we are controlled by it.

Solomon, the wisest person in history (**I Kings 3:12; 4:29-30**), describes this rational fear in **Proverbs 9:10**: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." In other words, the "beginning point" of gaining God's wise insight on our decisions and actions is "The fear of the LORD." Biblical, God-honoring "fear of the LORD" consists of Awe of God's *Power*, Reverence for God's *Person*, and a Passion for God's *Pleasure*. Today we will highlight some of the special privileges and blessings we can experience if we practice living in "The fear of the LORD."

Allow me to describe someone whose entire adult life testified he greatly "feared the LORD." When appointed Supreme Commander of our military, his first General Orders [July 4, 1775] called for chaplains to be provided for all troops. At his Presidential inauguration, he was the first to add these words to the oath of office, "so help me God." He then bent over and kissed the Bible upon which he'd sworn his oath. In his Farewell Address to the nation, he declared he would refuse to call anyone a "Patriot" who sought to overthrow the "indispensable supports" of "religion and morality" upon which the "political prosperity" of the United States depends. Who was this man? George Washington. He was the great man that he was because he greatly feared the LORD.

I've given you this background to declare were it not for the privileges God extends to those who fear Him, the United States of America would not have emerged as a free nation when it did. I can prove this by describing to you just one incident of the Revolutionary War, out of many I could relate. On the same day the Declaration of Independence was approved in Philadelphia, July 4, 1776, General William Howe landed on Staten Island with the first troops of a British invasion force. Within two months, 32,000 trained and battle-hardened soldiers were at his command. Only one obstacle stood in his way of giving the British complete control of the pivotal port of New York: barely 8,000 troops under the command of George Washington, half of whom were untrained, camped in the American-held town of Brooklyn.

On the morning of August 22, 1776, 15,000 British troops landed without opposition on the southeast shore of Brooklyn. Three days later, 5,000 reinforcements arrived. After nearly surrounding the Colonial Army, they launched a brutal attack on August 27 that crushed the American forces and drove them back to Brooklyn's northern tip. One more assault by the British, who outnumbered the Colonials by nearly three-to-one, would have defeated the American Army, Washington and his top officers would have been captured, and freedom's flickering flame would have been extinguished. But all that afternoon, while the

Americans grimly held their breaths, the final assault they fully expected never came. William Howe's tactics to that point in the Battle of Brooklyn had proven him to be a brilliant general. Yet, now, inexplicably, he now held back. All next day, this scene was repeated; waiting, waiting, but no attack.

Washington sensed God's restraining hand upon the British and held a council of war with his staff. He boldly planned to evacuate his entire army from Brooklyn in small boats. All through that night, while large campfires and a few men kept up the appearances of the Colonial encampment, troops were rowed to Manhattan Island. It was at least a minor miracle that not one boat was detected making the two-mile round trip, nor had a single British sentry noticed that the American soldiers had been withdrawn from their lines. But then dawn began to approach, under a cloudless sky, and at least three more hours were needed to complete the evacuation. According to eyewitness accounts in the diaries of several Colonial soldiers, a dense fog then began to rise quite mysteriously out of the ground and from the East River. This fog settled in a strange manner over both encampments, yet, eerily, it gave the Colonial Army the visibility needed to continue the evacuation. It was not until the last boat departed, with General Washington in it, that the fog began to lift. The stunned British then rushed to the shore and fired furiously after them, but the Americans were already out of range. God's timely intervention saved Washington, our Army, and our Independence!

George Washington in later years undoubtedly read **Psalms 34:6** from the KJV, the standard Bible of his day: "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." "This poor man" translates a Hebrew word that describes any person, man or woman (boy or girl), in moments of being "beaten down, needy, and afflicted." The NLT captures this sense of extreme urgency perhaps better than any other version: "In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened; He saved me from all my troubles." Washington experienced repeatedly throughout his storied life God indeed does grant certain privileges to those who fear Him as God and trust Him as their guide through life. Our text from **Psalms 34** mentions two privileges, provision and protection (vss. **7 & 9-10**). Today, I describe four of "The Privileges of the One Who Fears the Lord": Provision, Protection, Pilotage, and Partiality.

I. PROVISION

Psalms 34:9-10 reveals we do not need superior strengths or abilities for our essential needs to be met. "Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the LORD will lack no good thing." God promises to provide for us when we truly fear and honor Him as God. A small boy lived in a little town in the hills of Virginia during the Great Depression. He told me his family struggled "to keep body and soul together." A stranger appeared outside their home one day, which was odd because this remote area rarely saw strangers. She was starving; begging for something to eat. The boy's godly mother gave her a can of condensed milk, though this was the last food in their house. After she left, the boy protested, "But Momma, what are we going to eat now?" "The Lord will provide," she replied. Next morning, this boy was asked to go outside and bring in some wood. He grumbled, "What's the use? We got nothing to eat." As he walked along his eyes fell in disgust on the spot where this unknown woman had stood. He now saw two cans of condensed milk! This boy believed for the rest of his days that woman was an angel sent by God to test whether they would practice Christian hospitality, out of the fear of the LORD, when their own needs were great. God does not promise to provide for our greeds, but He does promise to provide for our needs: "Fear the LORD, you His godly people, for those who fear Him will have all they need."

II. PROTECTION

George Washington and our Continental Army experienced the reality of **Psalms 34:7** at the Battle of Brooklyn. The HCSB translation is, "The Angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them." "Encamps" translates a Hebrew word that means "to pitch a tent" in preparation "for attack or defense." Its root means "to show favor toward," indicating "encamps" is primarily a word for protective action. This is aptly expressed by the NLT: "For the Angel of the LORD is a guard; He surrounds and defends all who fear Him." Vivid illustrations of such protective favor are found in *A Table in the*

Presence: The Dramatic Account of How a U.S. Marine Battalion Experienced God's Presence amidst the Chaos of the War in Iraq. It was written by Lieutenant Carey Cash, a great-nephew of singer Johnny Cash, who served as a Naval Chaplain with the Fifth Marine Regiment of the First Marine Division's First Battalion. In February, 2003, his regiment deployed to Kuwait as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Corporal Hardy, a devout Christian from Alabama, drove the Humvee of Captain Wil Dickens, the headquarters company commander. Hardy often read or quoted Scripture from his green, Gideon New Testament (with **Psalms & Proverbs**), which he placed on the center radio mount. This Bible became a symbol to Dickens, Hardy, and Corporals Batke and Beavers, God would never leave or forsake them. Batke had been hardened by drug use and by disappointment with the adults closest to him. He wanted to believe but needed proof God would not prove to be another major disappointment. On April 10, the fiercest day of fighting inside Baghdad, a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) shot across the hood of their Humvee, blanketing its front in fire and smoke. Corporal Batke, sitting atop the Humvee's hardback shell to man the mounted gun, could feel overpressure of bullets whizzing past him. Batke and Hardy then both received an impression to look to the right and beheld a kneeling Iraqi 25' away pointing an RPG at them. An Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) might withstand a direct hit by an RPG, but a Humvee would be obliterated. Yet, as Batke whirled the Mark-19 mounted gun around toward the Iraqi, too late to stop him, the Iraqi didn't fire the RPG. Instead, he stood up as if he'd seen a ghost, waved to another Iraqi gunman, and these two men ran away at full speed! "For the Angel of the LORD is a guard; He surrounds and defends all who fear Him."

III. PILOTAGE

Psalms 25:12 (NIV) promises, "Who, then, are those who fear the LORD? He will instruct [point] them in the ways they should choose." Does our LORD still direct our steps today? One spring evening in 2002, as Loretta and I were leaving our church, I seemed to be directed to exit by the church's east door instead of the west door nearest our car. Just before we reached the door, a young couple, close friends, were coming back inside. We didn't know that a few minutes earlier, the wife had been in tears, crushed by discouragement after being rejected by all Veterinary colleges for the third year in a row. For most of her life, this God-fearing gal had dreamed of being a veterinarian. She'd even worked her way through the University of Arizona by providing excellent care at a pet clinic, and veterinarians who knew her gave her rave reviews. Yet, she'd been stunned nearly into hopelessness by the difficulty of gaining admission to a Veterinary school, which is even harder than being admitted into medical school. But God had heard her cries.

After we exchanged pleasantries, I noticed her eyes seemed puffy and asked if she'd been having sinus trouble. At this point, her eyes filled again with tears as she told us the real reason her eyes were swollen. With startling clarity, the Holy Spirit moved me to give her assurance God wanted her to become His veterinarian and she should continue to apply. I even said, "After you are accepted, we will help you celebrate!" Another year came and went of receiving nothing but rejections. Finally, on March 18, 2004, a letter came welcoming her into a Veterinary school. Today, she's a practicing veterinarian for **Jesus** in California!

IV. PARTIALITY

"Partiality" means God bestows special favor upon those who fear Him. **Psalms 147:11** (ESV) attests, "[T]he LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His steadfast love." The Hebrew word for "takes pleasure in" is also translated in the Bible as "delights," "enjoys," "approves," and "favors." We do justice to what God speaks to us here by saying, "[T]he LORD delights in bestowing favors upon those who please Him by how faithfully they fear Him." Without question, God loves everyone fully and equally. Yet, God specially rewards those who most faithfully trust Him as their moral guide and guardian.

A young black man, fresh out of high school in the 1940s, was sent to enroll in college with \$5.00 in his pocket. His father had died. After buying his bus ticket, \$5.00 was all his godly mother had to spare. By

the time he got to the school, what with meals and cab fare, he had \$1.50 left. He walked into the business office. His mother had convinced him God wanted him to go to this college and would take care of him. They feared the LORD; they trusted Him; He would not let them down. A large sign stared him in the face: "\$82.00. Cash, check, or money order." He got in line. He said later, "the Devil got in line with me." The Devil said, "How much money do you have?" "A dollar-and-a-half," he answered. "Well, can't you read?" the Devil taunted. "You need \$82. Do you have it?" "No," the man replied. "Then get out of line!"

This young man wanted to get out of line, but for some reason his legs would not move. Finally, the last student in front of him paid her bill and there he was, face-to-face with the cashier. At that moment, he felt a tap on his shoulder. "Are you Ed Hill?" a man asked. "Yes, I am," was the reply. The man said, "I'm Mr. Arnold. I've been looking for you all morning. Your Pastor told us you were coming. Have you paid yet?" "No," the young man replied. Mr. Arnold told him, "We want to offer you a four-year scholarship. It will pay your tuition, buy your books, cover room and board, and give you \$35.00 a month to live on!" This same young man became better known as the nationally renowned pastor E.V. Hill, who served God wonderfully in the Watts area of Los Angeles for forty-two years before moving on to Glory early in 2003.

Why does the LORD show partiality toward some? "[T]he LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His steadfast love."

CONCLUSION

Would you like to experience more of God's presence and power in the Provision of your needs, in His Protection during times of danger, in His Pilotage guiding you daily into His will, and in having God bestow upon you the Partiality that rewards your trust in Him with special favors? These blessings are *privileges*. They are not *rights* to which all of Christ's followers are entitled automatically. But these are four of the privileges that God unfailingly promises to bestow upon us when our lives demonstrate we are among those who truly fear Him as God. As **II Chronicles 16:9** (GWT) declares, "The LORD's eyes scan the whole world to find those whose hearts are committed to Him and to strengthen them."