

STUDY 10

Exodus 23:27

I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.

Read the context: Exodus 23:20-33

In the context of the verse for today, 3 times God says, “I will send...” What is the first thing God promises to send (verse 20)?

In the NKJV the word Angel is capitalized. It is generally accepted that this Angel is a theophany or the Presence of God in the person of Christ. What are the 2 promises which this Angel will fulfill (vs. 20)?

These are precious promises! How we need His keeping power to prevent us from going astray, to shield us from wandering off into distractions, to instruct us in His ways of right thinking and living.

And I think that the “places which God has prepared for us” is broader than just our final destination with Him in eternity. He has prepared places of ministry for us. The places of being a wife and a mother, the place of a servant in His Kingdom, the places of the heart that need to be transformed, the place of Love: these are the places that we need Him to bring us in to; these are the broad places Christ has won for us and wants us to inherit. It is the place of true freedom and joy, of victory over the sin within and the circumstances without. It is the place of righteousness; that is, thinking the way God thinks, acting the way God acts, fully possessing the life of God here and now. Stop right now and pray for the Spirit of Christ to go before you and fulfill these 2 promises in your life.

But verse 21 provides a check to our spirits. Here is a fear of the Lord verse that does not contain the word fear. How is the fear of the Lord conveyed in this verse? What are the commands or exhortations in this verse? What is the negative promise in this verse?

There are not many instances in the Bible, Old or New Testament, where God says He will not forgive. Rather, there are many, many times where God assures us He will forgive, that forgiveness is His heart toward us. It is a fearful thought that God would not forgive us. The Hebrew word here is different than the usual word for forgive or pardon; it has a variety of meanings, including lift, accept, suffer to bear, ease, exalt, help, hold up, respect, spare, yield, etc. It seems to convey the idea that this Angel will not overlook, treat lightly, accept as a matter of course, act as though it doesn't matter, or aid in any way our sin.

If we were to put this in the context of parenting, we know that overlooking or treating our children's sins lightly only encourages them to do more of it, for they can get away with it; it is, in fact, aiding them in sin! Christ will not do this. For He knows, as we should recognize with

STUDY 10

our children, that this would be partnering in and desiring our ruin. This helps to reveal to us that the clarion call to fear the Lord flows out of the love God has for us. He longs to deliver us from the certain destruction of sin. The fear of the Lord does this: “Beware of Him and obey His voice.”

What reason at the end of verse 21 does God give for the seriousness of these commands? Spend a few minutes reflecting on and praying for a higher view of the Name of the Lord. God did not send Christ to give us an easy out for our sin, or to allow us to take sin lightly.

In verses 22-26 God gives a series of blessings that He promised His people. What is the condition for receiving the promises (beginning of verse 22, verse 24, and the beginning of verse 25)?

What is the 2nd thing God says He will send (verse 27)? What will happen as a result (verse 27)? What precious promises these are! In this verse the fear of the Lord acts as our shield and refuge; but more than that, God sends it ahead of us like a front man to prepare the way for our victory.

What is the 3rd thing God says He will send (verse 28)? For good reasons (verses 29-30) God says He will not drive out the people all at once. What are the reasons? Though this passage is literal for the people of Israel, I believe we can also make a metaphoric application to our lives. God does not drive out all sin and temptations all at once when we become Christians. We often wish He would and wonder at the wisdom of not doing so. God sends His Angel (His Spirit) within us, and His fear and His hornets before us, but we still have to do the fighting. And little by little, as our spiritual strength increases and begins to fill and govern our lives, our enemies are pushed out; little by little, so that we gain control over every area of our lives through the power of His Spirit.

The passage ends with a final command and warning. What is the command? What is the warning?

Before leaving this verse for the day, spend some time asking God to search your heart for any ways you may have let the ways of the world creep into your life. Also think through your life and write down the “places” or territories of your heart that you have not yet gained victory over, where the enemy still seems to hold power (perhaps sloth, or unfaithfulness, or lack of diligence, or irritability, or lying, or unforgiveness, or...) and the truth of God’s character (good work ethic, faithfulness in all things, diligence, patience, truth, forgiveness, etc.) is not yet manifest in your life. God wants you to take possession of all this territory, all these places of the heart.

Reflect on Christ living within you, with all the holy power of God invested in Him, guiding and directing your decisions throughout the day; breathe in the air of His holy life. Then through the “eyes of your heart” envision the Fear of the Lord going before you. Let His holy fear be a comfort and a strong shield of protection for you. See His hornets being sent out before you to put to flight the temptations of the enemy. We do not fight nor face our days and the temptations

STUDY 10

within them in our own strength. Ask God to keep these spiritual, invisible realities before you. The fear of the Lord needs to be within us and before us; a check to our own spirits and a refuge from the attacks of the enemy.

Add to your Fear of the Lord list what you've learned from this verse.