

CITY OF THE LIVING GOD

THE FEAR OF GOD

33

SERIES

In dedication to all the soul-winners that need a Bible study on today's lack of the fear of God in our society and the common mistranslation of fear for only respect or reverence.

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“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged” (Deuteronomy 6:1-2).

One of the greatest lacks of our modern society is a true understanding of the fear of God. The absence of this stems from a number of reasons. One of the main reasons is an emphasis on only a partial recognition of God’s attributes. It is an unbalanced view that only sees God as merciful, loving, and gracious. It is blind to the other attributes of God such as wrath, judgment, and punishment. A balanced view sees God in all of his attributes.

In the next few sections of this study, we will study this subject to help us understand the true characteristics of God and how that impacts us in our faithful walk with God.

BIBLICAL VIEW ON FEAR

While some have tried to narrow the Bible's definition of fear to just "respect and reverence," the Scriptures are so clear that fear not only incorporates those aspects, but they include words such as "fear, dread, and terror."

At Mount Sinai, the people of Israel understood exactly what it meant to fear God. It is obvious that it was not just speaking about "respecting" God; it clearly shows "fear" that produced "trembling." The thundering, the lightning, the loud sound of a heavenly trumpet, and the smoking mountain from the fire on the mountain produced a fear of God in the people. Notice the people's response.

Exodus 20:18-19

"Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'"

They feared that they would die by coming before the LORD, so they asked Moses to be the medium between God and them. Moses response shows that the word meant "fear."

Exodus 20:20-21

"And Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.'" So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was."

Moses wanted the people to have a healthy fear of God for the purpose of avoiding sin. But once they became obedient, there was no reason to fear God. If they are living for him, there is no reason to fear a consequence. That's why the Bible states:

Proverbs 1:7

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, but living for God by fear alone will not get one into heaven. Our hearts can deceive us into losing that fear. After gaining a fear, the believer must transition into a love of God. That is the balance. Fear brings us to God and love keeps us living for him. However, there must be a fear that is within us that understands that if I fail to live for him, there is judgment. Sounds harsh for a society that teaches there are no consequences for our actions, however it is a clear biblical teaching.

THE FEAR OF GOD

There are so many examples of the Scriptures that teach this concept of fear, and they are obviously speaking about not just reverence, but fear in the true sense of the word.

Exodus 15:16

“Fear and dread will fall on them; By the greatness of Your arm They will be as still as a stone, Till Your people pass over, O Lord, Till the people pass over Whom You have purchased.”

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.”

2 Chronicles 17:10

“And the fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.”

Luke 12:5

“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”

Philippians 2:12

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Hebrews 10:31

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Hebrews 12:25

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.”

A LOVING FATHER THAT CORRECTS

The book of Hebrews compares the love of an earthly father with that of our Heavenly Father. As earthly fathers correct with discipline, so does God as our Father. The word chastise means to correct by inflicting punishment such as spanking a child.

Hebrews 12:5-6

“And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.’”

Obviously, he is saying that the Lord is our true Father that corrects us because he loves us. Just as our earthly father disciplines us through spanking or corporeal punishment, so does our Heavenly Father. He

does it not because he enjoys it; he does it for his love for us so that he can make us better children. In fact, he says further:

Hebrews 12:7-8

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”

Just as earthly fathers are supposed to provide a balance of love and discipline, so does our Heavenly Father. An earthly father that does not correct his son, does not love his son, because *“He who spares his rod (a thin stick) hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly”* (Prov. 13:24).

PERFECT LOVE

After a child grows up with an understanding that there is correction for bad behavior develops a balanced respect for his father. He no longer fears him, because his behavior has been shaped into a mature son. He no longer fears the punishment because his behavior is good and does not require correction. Not only is that correct, but he has a loving relationship with his father and has great respect for him. However, he does know that there are consequences if he ever chooses to walk away from his father’s teachings.

When you have great love for your Heavenly Father, you surpass the fear of retribution, because you no longer think of wanting to be disobedient. It’s not how you think anymore. You love your Heavenly Father and new way of life. The Bible calls that “Perfect Love.”

1 John 4:18-19

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us” (ESV).

Are you in love with your Heavenly Father? If you are in love with him, then you will want to do things that please him. You won't operate out of fear. Jesus said:

John 14:21

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.”

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