

## The Fear of God

Ever consider why society in general views *fear* as negative? Is it because fear is interpreted as *weakness*, to be despised as a character flaw? Fear originated in the Garden of Eden when Satan caused Adam and Eve to lose their reverence for God—and all of society has followed the same path.

Today, people are led by ego and vanity—as opposed to being wary and vigilant, being disciplined, wise servants concerned of consequences (I Peter 5:8). Most act without thinking—to their detriment. This malady originates from the deceiver, the father of lies (John 8:44) who recycles it from generation to generation. Proverbs 9:10 says the *fear of God* is the “beginning of wisdom.” But without the Holy Spirit, most people make bad decisions—with consequences that can last for generations.

Satan’s plan is to separate humanity from our loving Creator, negating the union of intimacy and love that is needed for mankind to fulfill God’s purpose. We are meant to be the Lamb of God’s bride-to-be, an everlasting family of spirit-composed kings and priests—superior even to the loyal angels. Those who have suffered for their reverence (fear), loyalty, and love toward God can only achieve total victory over sin and death if we *obey* our Creator.

Note that perfect love *casts out fear* (I John 4:18). But this is true only *if* we are genuinely repentant and obedient to God the Father, at one with Him, imbued with the Holy Spirit. *Then*, there is no reason to fear our Lord, is there? Yet, it is crucial to have a *healthy fear* of God, as we shall see.

Proper *fear of God* is composed of many aspects. There are at least 144 biblical references to “fearing God”—19 of which occur in the New Testament. A few examples are:

- II Cor. 7:1—We’re to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.
- Eph. 5:21—Submit to one another in the fear of God.
- I Peter 2:17—Fear (revere) God.
- Acts 9:31—Walk in the fear of God. (The early church was at peace and grew because they were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.)
- Rev. 14:6-7—Fear God and give glory to Him

We need to understand that fear is so much *more* than just loving God. As asked in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, “What does the Lord require?” Here is the answer:

- To fear the Lord our God
- To walk in all His ways
- To love Him
- To serve Him with all our being
- To keep His commandments and statutes

So love and fear compliment one another in perfect harmony.

Isn't the "fear of God" ultimately our loving *reverence* and *submission* to Him and to His authority? In wisdom, we recognize how awesome and powerful He is, and therefore choose not to sin against Him.

This is a lifelong endeavor; to know Him is to grow to love every aspect of our Lord's character—and it is a conscious choice. We must submit to His guidance and direction as supreme. We are to "walk with God" as did Enoch—a man who truly loved and feared God (Gen. 5:24).

Did you know that Jesus Himself feared God? He prayed diligently to be saved from death—saved because He feared God. Although He was God's son, He learned obedience by suffering—and, when perfected, became the author of salvation to all who obey Him. Afterwards He was designated as High Priest according to order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:7-10).

In every generation God has called and chosen a few followers. After initial repentance, we are imbued with the "comforter" to begin the process of striving for perfection (Matt. 5:48; Heb. 6:21). We are to develop the gifts and talents God has given to further His prophetic plan for mankind.

Indeed, our predestined purpose is to *fear* God and keep His precepts—for this is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13).

In addition, Christ stated in Luke 5:12 and Mathew 10:28—"do not fear those who kill the body, but fear God who is able to destroy both soul and body."

Our heavenly Father commands us to fear Him. Why? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:26-31). Anyone who commits the "unpardonable sin" (Mark 3:22-30; Matt. 12:31-32; Luke 12:10) and those who are incorrigibly wicked will find out what this means on the great day of judgment (Heb. 6:4-6; Rev. 20:11-15). (The "unpardonable sin" is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—the malicious, determined rejection of God's precepts after having previously loved and obeyed Him.)

Understandably, no one impure or unholy can be in God's future kingdom as part of His eternal family. Therefore, in mercy, He will destroy them—as they made a choice to reject the God of love. He doesn't force anyone to obey, but there are literally life and death implications to the choices we make as potential firstfruits. Once we are converted and receive the Holy Spirit, there is no "looking back." If we rebel or become unrepentant, we suffer eternal death.

If we *fear*, love, and obey God, we will be resurrected (or transformed) to eternal life as part of His everlasting family.

So the good news is that God believes in us and has called us to grow and develop—to emulate Jesus—as future priests as part of His eternal family! He did *not* call us to fail. We are called to obtain the ultimate victory as ambassadors of God, to assist humanity in achieving their future salvation. God wishes that all be saved. No matter what happens in the future—and most of us will suffer—He promises to make it bearable. Jesus is our amazing example of a man who achieved perfection in spite of being targeted His entire life by the usurper and his evil servants.

We will prevail as long as we focus on faithful endurance, prayer, and Bible study as we seek to live righteously with the help of the "comforter" and with the profound knowledge that we are *sanctified* by the infinite power of God.

Fellowship is a critical component—loving one another as God loves us. And it is crucial to remain *separated* from the world and its temptations.

### **Becoming a God-Fearing Person**

Have you ever heard someone referred to as a “God fearing” man or woman? This is what we are called to be! But what does it mean to be a true Christian, loyal follower of Christ, who fears God?

Jesus said: “If you truly love Me, keep the commandments, namely mine” (John 14:15-31). As Christians we are tasked with emulating or imitating our Lord’s character in all aspects. For example, Jesus came to serve, not be served (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 13:1-17). Plus, Jesus did exactly as God instructed (John 14:21-24).

As stated earlier, Jesus has absolute reverence and respectful *fear* of God—even though He is the Word of God (John 1:1-3) and the Son of God (Col. 1:15-16).

There are two kinds of fear: the spirit of fear (II Tim. 1:7), which is harmful, and the “fear of God,” which is beneficial.

God the Father has the highest regard for those who fear Him as evidenced by their reverence and submission to His authority. We must be of a humble and contrite spirit, and tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:2). And if we obey Him—have a healthy *fear* of God—we will also be blessed. Indeed, the fear of God will be our *treasure* (Isa. 33:5-6). What an amazing promise!

God loves all who love Him, and all who seek Him early will find Him (Prov. 8:17). He hates pride, vanity, and arrogance—and all forms of perversity and evil. Indeed, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (Prov. 8:13; also 6:16-19).

Moreover, “The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge...” (Prov.1:7). If we seek diligently for the knowledge and understanding of God, then we can have this godly fear (Prov. 2:3-12). And God’s blessings can be ours if we fear Him with awe and wonder.

More of His amazing promises include:

- **God’s abiding love.** Salvation is a free gift of God—with genuine repentance, baptism, anointing of the Holy Spirit—yet we *learn* to obey God. Thus, His love is *conditional*. Jesus said that if we truly love Him, we *will* keep His commandments (John 14:15-31). He and the Father are one—thus, the Father’s commandments are still valid, including the Ten Commandments (John 10:30; Deut.10:12-13). Please study all of Deuteronomy 5 and 6, and Leviticus 23; these precepts remain valid until heaven and earth pass away (Matt. 5:17-20; Luke 16:17). Christ came to magnify the Law (Isa. 42:21). His life and ministry was focused on faithful obedience in fulfilling the Law. He even gave us a new commandment—to love one another as He loves us (John 13:34-35).
- **God’s laws define His everlasting love.** “This is the love of God, that we keep His precepts (commandments)—and they are not a burden” (I John 5:3). In godly fear we choose to obey Him with joy and reverence, believing in His Son and the promise of eternal life (I John 5:11-13).
- **Protection.** “The angel of the Lord guards us and saves us from harm” (Psa. 34:7). Yet, we will suffer at times, as did Christ, as a part of our spiritual growth.

- **The Comforter.** The Holy Spirit is a constant in life, teaching us all things (John 14:26; I John 2:20). God gives us the Spirit of power, love, and sound mind (II Tim. 1:7).
- **Provision.** We will have all we *need*—not necessarily what we want (Psa. 34:10).
- **God reveals His secrets (mysteries) to us**—if we are obedient to His Word (Psa. 25:14; Col. 1:26; Eph. 1:9).
- **Fear of the Lord**—the beginning of wisdom (Psa. 111:10).
- **Confidence.** “The fear of God gives strong confidence.... The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to deliver us from the snares of death” (Prov. 14:26-27).
- **Life and Peace.** “The fear of the Lord brings life; he who has it will live in peace and will not be visited by evil” (Prov. 19:23; I Tim. 4:8).
- **Honor.** “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life” (Prov. 22:4).
- **Hope.** “Don’t let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous always in the fear of God. As surely as there is a hereafter, your hope will not be cut off” (Prov. 23:17-18).

Will we choose to “pick up our cross” and follow our Lord and Savior? (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; Matt. 16:24-26). Will we emulate His sacrifice unto the death of our “self” ?

As a man, Jesus feared God and fulfilled His destiny as the Lamb who redeems us from death. We are predestined (Rom. 8:29-30) to be part of His eternal family, if we obey Him and fear our heavenly Father! Trust in the Lord for an amazing future! Imagine—life everlasting with no pain, sorrow, sin, disease, or death!

How fantastic is our infinite future with God—and with Christ and the untold billions who truly fear and love our Creator.

When Christ returns, let us pray He will say: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21, 23).

## Keys to Learning to Fear God

Like Jesus, our delight must be in the “fear of the Lord” (Isa. 11:1-3). We are to grow and overcome, purging ourselves from all defilement of both flesh and spirit—“perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Cor.7:1). Here are some keys to *learning to fear God*:

- **Daily Prayer.** We are to pray without ceasing—communicate with our Father on a regular basis (I Thess. 5:17). God wants to be best friends. No longer are we just servants, but *friends* (John 15:15)—if we fear God and choose to obey Him. To talk with God *in reverence* is to emulate Jesus. Practice makes perfect!
- **Regular Bible Study.** To know God we must first fear (revere) Him! The Bible leads us to grow in grace, knowledge, and understanding. The Bible is simply God’s inspired word, as men were moved by the Holy Spirit to write it. The Bible is designed to guide and direct us in all aspects of life. Mankind cannot live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds from God (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4).

- **Ongoing repentance is required.** We are all sinners (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:8-9) and need to ask God daily to forgive our misdeeds. Our mediator, Christ, acts on our behalf to redeem us. Each time we come before God in repentance, the “slate is wiped clean”—our sins are forgiven. God does not “keep score” or hold grudges. He will forgive—*if* we are genuinely repentant. It is crucial, however, to *forgive others* their sins against us or God will not forgive ours (Matt. 6:14-15; Mark 11:26; Luke 6:37).
- **Obedience to our heavenly Father.** As we learn to trust and faithfully submit to God’s guidance and direction, obedience will result. We are lifelong students who are tasked with emulating Jesus as future priests and kings. What an amazing and awesome promise when we “graduate.” If we joyfully seek to live righteously with God at the helm, the result will be immortality as part of His everlasting family!

In conclusion, the reverential *fear of God* is the crucial beginning of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, grace, repentance, peace, forgiveness, unity, and joy.

We can love God with all our being only if we learn to emulate Christ Jesus. He gave us a new command to “love one another as He loves us.” And that is only possible with submission to God *in reverent fear*.

Ultimately, the whole duty of a man or woman is to genuinely *fear God* and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13)!

—By Mike Prokop; Bible passages paraphrased by author