

THE MOTIVATION TO FEAR THE LORD

INTRODUCTION

Believers will all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). The verse that follows speaks of *the fear of the Lord* – translated as *terror* which is *exceedingly great fear* – being closely linked to *the Judgement Seat of Christ*. Understanding that we must all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ must necessarily cause us **to know** the *fear of the Lord*.

2 Cor 5:11

Therefore, **knowing the fear of the Lord**, we persuade others ...

There are several Scripture references to the *fear of God* being *terrifying*.

Gen. 35:5

And as they journeyed, **a terror from God** fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

Job 31:23

For **I was in terror of calamity from God**, and I could not have faced his majesty.

Ps. 88:15-16

¹⁵Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer **your terrors**; I am helpless. ¹⁶Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me.

Lk. 12:5

But I will **warn you whom to fear**: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. **Yes, I tell you, fear him!**

Heb. 10:31

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

Solomon understood the centrality of fearing God. He ends his great compendium of practical wisdom stating that to fear God and keep His commandments is the conclusion of all that he has discussion in his book. We must *fear God* because *He will judge our every deed*.

Eccl. 12:13-14

¹³The end of the matter; all has been heard. **Fear God** and keep his commandments. **for this is the whole duty of man**. ¹⁴**For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.**

God is to be Feared

A simple reading of the Bible will help us see the frequency with which we are commanded to *fear God*. The *fear the Lord* is fuelled by the *Word of God*, or the *instructions* and *commandments* of God. We are to obey God's Word and teach our children to do so. We are to ensure that from generation to generation, God's people will *fear the Lord*. God's Word and commands enable us to know *what* we are to *fear the Lord* about. *God's fear* is to be *understood*.

Deut. 6:1-2

¹“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over; to possess it, ²**that you may fear the LORD your God**, you and your son and your son's son, **by keeping all his statutes and his commandments**, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.

Ps. 34:9

Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

Prov. 2:1-5

¹My son, **if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments** with you, ²**making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding**; ³yes, **if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding**, ⁴**if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures**, ⁵**then you will understand the fear of the LORD** and find the knowledge of God.

Deut. 10:12

And now, Israel, **what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God**, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul ...

Defining the Fear of God

What does it MEAN to *fear God*?

- **To Fear the Lord means to be in Reverent awe of His Person and Works:** The God revealed to us in the Bible is intrinsically full of great *glory, majesty, purity, and power*. *Awe of God* means to possess a *deep reverence* of God. One's whole being must be completely *overwhelmed* with the almightiness of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In such a state of *awe*, in private or public prayer, you speak extremely

carefully and never casually.

Ecd. 5:1-2

¹Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. ²Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

When Moses went up to meet God on Mount Sinai the people were warned not to go near.

Ex. 19:16, 18-19

¹⁶On the morning of the third day there were *thunders* and *lightnings* and a *thick cloud* on the mountain and a *very loud trumpet blast*, so that *all the people in the camp trembled* ... ¹⁸Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in *fire*. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and *the whole mountain trembled greatly*. ¹⁹And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and *God answered him in thunder*.

Isaiah was *overwhelmed* with a sense and burden of his personal sin in the Presence of God.

Is. 6:1-5

¹In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him stood *the seraphim*. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

The Psalmist calls all the earth and its people to *revere* the Lord.

Ps 33:8

Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!

• To Fear the Lord Means to be Scared to sin and the Consequences of sin

The *fear of God* is both *being scared* of Him because He is holy and cannot tolerate sin as well as *being in awe* of Him because He is so much greater than us. It helps us become more conscious of *the evil character* and *effects of sin* as well as *the consequences of disobedience*. In times of temptation or trial we forget this. Fear of God motivates us to take God's laws very seriously. Sinning deliberately has serious consequences.

Ex. 20:20

Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the *fear of him* may be before you, *that you may not sin*."

Heb. 10:26-31

²⁶For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, *there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a *fury of fire* that will *consume* the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses *dies without mercy* on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment, do you think, *will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?* ³⁰For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Our Existence and Living Daily in Wisdom is Dependant on the Fear of God

True wisdom, knowledge, insight, discernment, understanding, common sense, come from a deeply rooted *fear of God*. To know God is to fear Him. As we *fear Him* our knowledge of God rises above the superficial to a deepened and reverential intimacy with Him. We then have His brilliance of thought, intellect, and capacity to understand the deepest and greatest things of life and existence. Knowing God is equal to knowing Him through His written Word.

1 Cor. 1:30

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption ...

Job 28:28

And he said to man, 'Behold, *the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'

Ps. 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Ps. 112:1

Praise the LORD! **Blessed** is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!

Prov. 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov. 1:29

Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD

Prov. 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Fear of the Lord is not Natural – it Needs to be Learned

Wisdom and knowledge are cerebral. Most of us are not given to thinking and live on the level of emotions and on a “as long as it helps me” basis. Besides, our natural minds are hostile to God. We need to be transformed in our minds to discern the will of God.

Rom. 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The *fear of the Lord* needs to be taught, learned, and we need to teach our children too about how to *fear the Lord*. We need to make this practically possible and measure our growth in the *fear of God*. The *fear of the Lord* should affect our individual lives as well as our families. We are commanded to teach our children to *fear God* by training them to hate sin and to love God’s commands. A Christian’s main goal for his children must be that they learn to live by God’s wisdom. Teaching them to fear the Lord is the first important step.

Deut. 4:10

⁹“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—¹⁰how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’

Deut. 6:1-2

¹“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over; to possess it, ²that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.

Ps. 34:11

Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

God was concerned about making us capable of fearing Him that He sent His Son to save us from our sins through His propitiatory death and mighty resurrection. He gave us grace to repent of our sins and by His mercy forgave us. God then put a new heart and mind within us so that we will *fear Him*.

Jer. 32:39-40

³⁹I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

The Attributes of God Fuel the Fear of God

A sure way to learn to *fear God* is to know Him. To know Him is to understand His nature, character and attributes. Take a look at a few as examples of how this nurtures *fear of God*.

- **God is Holy**

Rev. 15:4

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

- **God is Creator**

Ps. 33:6-9

⁶By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. ⁷He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. ⁸Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! ⁹For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

Ps. 96:4-5

⁴For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

Eccl. 3:14

I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.

Mk. 4:41

And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

- **God is merciful and forgiving.**

Ps. 130:3-4

³If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

- **God is loving**

1 Jn. 4:16-18

¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe *the love that God has for us. God is love*, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷By this is love perfected with us, *so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment*, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸There 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. ; but He also is holy, just, and righteous

- **God is Just**

Is. 59:18

¹⁸*According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment.* ¹⁹*So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives.*

CONCLUSION

The fear of God is an important and serious motivation when we know we will stand before God to be scrutinised by Him for all we have done in the body.