

What is the Fear of God?

**Text: Psalm 111 // Date: 10/18/15 // Dr. David Crowe //
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1. The Fear of God defined:

- a. "A reverence of his majesty, a dread of his displeasure, an obedient regard to his sovereign authority, a love of His Being and fellowship with Him, consistent with adoption, forgiveness, love, trust, joy, hope, trembling, honour, thanksgiving, and seeking God is godly fear." Jonathan Crosby.
- b. "But what is this fear of the Lord? It is that affectionate reverence; by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law. His wrath is so bitter, and his love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please him, and—because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptations - a holy watchfulness and fear, "that he might not sin against him" (Hebrews 12:28, 29). This enters into every exercise of the mind, every object of life (Hebrews 13:17)." Charles Spurgeon

2. The Bible's Words for Fear:

- a. In Hebrew, yirah (Jon 1:16, Ps 90:11), yare and pachad (Job 3:25a, Ps 119:120) mean reverent fear, terror, or dread, normally translated simply fear. There are other words in Hebrew for mere respect, reverence, or honor, such as kabad (Ex 20:12).
- b. In Greek fear/terror is phobo (Mat 28:4, 1 Pet 2:17c), where reverence or honor is timao (1 Pet 2:17a/d).

With this distinction in both Hebrew and Greek, some still assert that "fear merely means reverence." The Biblical records indicate that the people of scripture experienced terror and dread.

3. Close encounters with God in the Bible

- a. Jeremiah 5:22 (NIV) "Should you not fear me?" declares the Lord. "Should you not tremble in my presence?"
- b. Job - "God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me."
- c. Moses - So fearful was the spectacle that Moses cried out, "I am terrified and tremble!"
- d. Hebrews 12:29 (HCSB) for our God is a consuming fire.

4. Fear vs. Love – Which one should motivate us to obey God?

- a. Churches today focus only on the Love of God. Others only on the Fear of God. Which way is right?

- b. “[Fear] goes hand in hand with love: love is the positive side, fear the negative; love prompts one to do what pleases God, fear prompts one to refrain from what displeases God. Neither can dispense with the other; neither functions alone.” – R.C.H. Lenski

5. Family Fear vs. Slave Fear – Which one is correct?

- a. Slave Fear - the kind of fear which a slave would feel towards a harsh and unyielding master.
- b. Family Fear - the loving fear of a child toward his father.
 - i. “that indefinable mixture of reverence, fear, pleasure, joy and awe which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what He has done for us.” Sinclair Ferguson

Whenever we sin, a correct understanding of the fear of God will mean that we do not have to think that God is going to “Zap” us in hatred, but rather, that He will discipline us in love.

6. Characteristics of someone who is fearing the Lord

- a. It is to hate all sin, both evil ideas and evil men, because these things offend God (Prov 8:13; 6:16-19; 14:16,27; 16:6; 23:17; Job 1:1; 28:28; Ps 5:5; 97:10; 119:128; 139:21-22; II Cor 7:1).
 - i. “Anytime we sin with the thought lurking in the back of our minds that God will forgive us, we aren’t living in the fear of God.” Jerry Bridges
- b. It is to depart from evil that you have been considering or doing (Proverbs 3:7; Psalm 34:14).
- c. Abraham proved his fear of God by his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:12).
- d. They are willing to deny themselves for God or His kingdom (Nehemiah 5:15).
- e. They delight greatly in God's commandments: Obedience to scripture is not a burden to such men (Psalm 112:1).
- f. They pray a lot: Cornelius, an example of a man fearing God, prayed to God always (Acts 10:2).
- g. They submit to each other in all proper relationships, not disputing or striving at all (Eph 5:21).
- h. The fear of God is one of the greatest antidotes to arrogance and means of humility (Rom 11:20).
- i. The best employees in the world are those who truly fear God and show it to masters (Col 3:22).
- j. They reverence God for His person, name, word, and worship (Psalm 89:7; 86:11; 138:2; 89:7).