

The Fear of God

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Introduction

Mysophobia is fear of "dirt." Hydrophobia is fear of "water." Nyctophobia is the fear of "darkness." Acrophobia is fear of "high places." Taxophobia is fear of being "buried alive." Xenophobia is fear of "strangers." Necrophobia is fear of the "dead." Claustrophobia is fear of "confined places." Triskaidekaphobia is fear of the "number 13." There are many types of fears that plague the lives of people. But there is another fear that is rarely if ever mentioned today among the lives of people, even among those within the church. It is the fear of God. In this lesson we want to learn what the Bible teaches about the fear of God. The fear of the Lord is something that many Christians have a tough time dealing with. After all, doesn't God want to be our comforter? Doesn't He want us to enjoy life and His presence? Aren't we supposed to be related to God through grace instead of fear? If this is true, then how can we fear God? Why should we fear Him and in what way should we fear God? We need to answer these types of questions as we study about the fear of God.

The problem with postmodern preachers today is that they seem to be somewhat one-sided in their teaching. Many times they only emphasize the love and forgiveness of God and the new start that people can have with God after they have sinned (1 John 1:9). Of course, all of this is true. Where would we be if God did not give us a fresh start? But we must beware that all of this emphasis does not lead to sinful living and the thinking that somehow we can become careless in our living simply because God will always be there to give us a fresh start after we have sinned. Somehow, in the midst of all of this emphasis, we have lost sight of the fear of God.

Let's be honest. When was the last time you heard a message on the fear of God? We sometimes wonder why the church has departed so far from godliness and holiness today. One reason is that many Christians have lost sight of the fear of God. Whatever happened to God-fearing Christians? There was a day in American Christianity when a "fear of God" was an emblem of genuine Christianity. The

expression “God-fearing” has almost become archaic in the church and society in which we live. Many today have lost sight of who God is and no longer possess a healthy fear toward His presence, omniscience, holiness, and their accountability before God. Our attitude toward God has become very casual and mundane and many seem unaffected today by the reality of God and His presence. This is why people want to dress casual when coming to church and why many today have no problem with worldly music and other entertaining pragmatic marketing techniques being promoted in the church. The existence of God and God’s character must once again reshape our lives, govern our conduct and actions, and have a practical impact upon our day-to-day living. Are you a God-fearing Christian? The Bible tells us that we should develop a wholesome dread or fear of God so that our lives can be lived out in a manner that is pleasing to Him.

It may not surprise us that the teaching on fearing God is a lost biblical truth within the modern-day mega church movement. Hidden in the back of ecclesiastical closets of the church, behind all of the self-esteem teachings, the anger workbooks, divorce recovery workshops and motivational seminars; hidden in a small box that is labeled “Handle with Care,” there is the teaching about the fear of God. We are going to open the box in this study and see what God’s Word says about fearing God. In short, the fear of God is a healthy response to God’s holiness that drives us to accountability and service for the Lord.

Someone wrote:

"We have defanged the tiger of truth. We have tamed the lion. The tragedy of modern faith is that we no longer are capable of being terrified."

Defining the Fear of God

Steve Wells, author of the Skeptic’s Annotated Bible, highlighted 2 Timothy 1:7 and 1 John 4:18 (verses indicating Christians are not to fear), and placed alongside these verses twenty-six Bible references that specify we are to fear God. He then asked, “Should we fear God?” Obviously, it was Wells’ intent to convince his readers that the Bible’s discussion of fear is contradictory. How can a person fear God

and not fear God at the same time? The answer is simple. We must define what the Bible means by fear in those passages that tell us not to fear.

If we are going to understand the fear of God we must define what we mean when a person fears God or is known as a “God-fearing” person. In order to arrive at a Biblical definition, we must search the Scriptures to help us understand the Biblical concept behind fearing God. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word that is translated fear (yare’) presents the usual concept of fear or terror as we know it today. The New Testament word translated fear (phobos) is a word that also connotes fright, fear, or terror. We get our word phobia from this word. The question is how we should relate this fear to Christian living. Are we to be literally scared out of our wits at the presence of God? Are we to pass through a horrifying experience when we address God and approach Him in prayer and daily living? The answer is very simple.

We are to know and experience God as an approachable God who loves us and who is concerned with our lives (Heb. 4:15-16). We can approach Him in confidence knowing that He always accepts us (Eph. 1:6) and wants to be involved with our lives (James 4:8; Psalm 46:1-2). Since this is true we must understand that the concept of the “fear of God” must have a different meaning other than being scared or frightened of God and not being able to experience the wonder of His personal presence and fellowship in our lives. The contexts that present the concept of fearing God will give us some insight on the way the Bible wants us to interpret and understand the fear of God.

The Biblical concept of fearing God can be defined in four ways:

1. There is a fear that relates to reverence and worship.

The Bible seems to suggest that God’s saints should fear Him in a reverential and respectful way. In other words, there is a healthy fear that relates to possessing a profound reverence for God’s Being, holiness, and majesty. There are verses that connect the fear of God with worship and therefore a sense of reverence and awe is attached to the concept of fearing God.

a. Holy worship

Psalm 5:7

“But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.”

Is this the way you worship God in church? Many come to church today to be entertained and get some kind of personal high instead of knowing the fear of God in their time of worship. This is a type of reverential worship that is geared around God’s holiness. We are to come to church knowing that God is holy and that He wants to be worshipped in holiness (“I worship toward thy holy temple”). One thing is certain. We can only be reverent when we are holy. Thus, reverence and holiness are two peas on the same pod as we will see in the following verses.

Psalm 89:7

“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.”

The modern church of today wants relevance instead of reverence. They want to bring music into the church that reflects the unregenerate lifestyle and entertains sinners. But in the midst of all of this marketing madness, the fear of God is lost in the assembly of the saints – a reverential fear related to God’s holiness.

Psalm 96:9

“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.”

The church today wants happy worship instead of holy worship. Many times people want to go to “happy hour” instead of the “holy hour” of worship. Let’s cut through all of the red tape and get right to the point. The beauty of holiness is not represented in the modern rock sounds of jazz music and man’s marketing ploys of entertainment. When we worship God we are to represent God’s holiness and by doing so express a reverential fear toward His Person.

“But to Thy house will I resort
To taste Thy mercies there;
I will frequent Thy holy court,
And worship in Thy fear.”

b. Heavenly worship

The inhabitants of Heaven worshipfully sing in Revelation 15:4: “Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

Heavenly worship is always holy worship. This is something that can't be said about earthly worship. In heaven they worship God for His holiness and righteous judgments. The point is this. There should be a reverential type of fear or awe about God that we possess in our hearts and lives as we worship God, realizing how holy God is in His personal presence and works. Many times we lose sight of how holy, great, and magnificent God is. We lose a sense of wonder for God's person, power, and presence. The fear of God is a concept that is related to our times of worship and how we think about God. Reverential fear of God involves possessing a proper attitude toward God – His holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy, and majesty. What is our attitude toward God? The way we worship reflects our attitude toward God. When our worship is worldly and carnal then our attitude toward God lacks reverence or godly fear.

“Ye who fear him, oh, draw near him!
Ye his saints, with one accord
Come before him and adore him:
Hallelujah, praise the Lord!”

c. Hallowed worship

The fear of God is a Biblical concept that is related to our times of worship and how we think about God. Our worship is to reflect hallowedness or sacredness since God Himself is holy (Matt. 6:9). The way we worship is the way we reflect who God is and what He

does. This is why we should express reverence to God in the way we dress, the music we present to God, and how we present ourselves in our time of worship in God's House. Our meetings with God's people are to be hallowed or sacred. This is why they are called "holy convocations" (Lev. 23:2-3) and "solemn assemblies" (Lev. 23:36) or sacred meetings that center on reverencing God by upholding His character of holiness and purity. Why? It's because we are to possess the fear of God in our hearts and actions. The way we come to worship God is very important. We are saying to God, "This is what I think about You. This is my opinion of You." The way many Christians are worshipping today does not express a reverential type of fear and awe of God's holiness, glory, and majesty. Isn't God worth more than a pair of old blue jeans?

What does God really mean to you? When we fear God or reverence Him we will not possess a carefree attitude and adopt the "come as you are" mentality that is being promoted in churches today. No! We will come to church knowing that God is the omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent God of all holiness and purity and we will want to honor and show respect to Him by the way we dress and worship. Worship today is more conducive to a hockey game, or some kind of party atmosphere, instead of reverencing God in His absolute holiness and majesty.

Churches are becoming like night clubs without cigarette smoke. The concept of a reverential fear of God is being lost in many modern worship scenes. When the church gets a fresh glimpse of Isaiah's holy God they will stop all the nonsense and carnality that is connected to modern worship. Only when we reconnect with God in His absolute purity and holiness will we live a God-fearing life of reverence and respect toward Him in our manner of worship and everyday living.

d. Healthy worship

The fear of God is definitely linked or related to worship. It can be Biblically defined as a reverence for God because of His character and creative powers. We worship the great God of creation in our everyday living as we reflect upon His creative wonders throughout the earth. This is a healthy and natural form of worship. A sense of

awe, wonder, and reverential fear should be linked to those times we reflect upon God's creative powers.

Psalm 33:4-9 records:

"For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

I remember wanting to take a break from the city while attending the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music. There was a place called "Reed's Lake" that was kind of a retreat area from the city life. You could go there and get alone. I did this on several occasions. I would go walk through the woods alone with God and worship Him and experience the wonder of God's person and the joy of His presence. One time I was sitting on a log and a squirrel jumped on the other end of the log and just sat there and looked at me for the longest time. Now my friend, we do not worship the creation but we worship the great and glorious God of the creation (1 Chron. 16:25-26). He is the great God who made the mountains, who hung the stars in space, and wrote the song for the robin to sing. When we worship him with reverence, awe, and wonder we are expressing the Biblical concept of fearing God.

Jeremiah 5:22

"Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?"

"You scattered the stars with Your mighty hand.
You stirred up the seas and formed the land.
The tenderest blossom the sweetest rain,
Seek only to worship Your worthy name.
The oceans roar the wind proclaims,

The majesty of Your holy name.
Your praise resounds throughout the land,
All glory to the great I Am!

e. Heartbreaking worship

Isaiah 6:1-5

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

When Isaiah saw God and worshipped Him, his heart was broken over his sin and his life was changed. When the God of all glory and majesty and holiness gets a hold of your heart you can't be the same. You can't ever be the same again. You can't sin and you can't go your own way and do your own thing. You will worship God and be so stunned with His holiness and awesome presence that you will stop doing it your way and start doing it God's way.

What really happened to Isaiah? When Isaiah saw a fresh vision of God's holiness he saw his own sinfulness and God's displeasure with his sinful living. This caused Isaiah to pattern His life to God's holiness. When we understand who God is and when the absolute holiness of God's purity penetrates our soul we can't help but make changes in our lives. We will have a new sense of accountability toward God. We will want to pattern our life after God's holiness and live in a way that is pleasing to Him. This is what holiness does to us. A right view and understanding of God transforms us. When God's personal Being and Presence is impressed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 2:10) we will then want to walk in the Spirit's power (Gal. 5:25) and live victoriously. Isaiah worshipped God with reverential fear when he saw a vision of the holiness of God (Isaiah 6:1-5). Verse five of this chapter brings Isaiah to a place of

inspection before God that produces a new profound reverence for God's holiness, which in return changes his manner of living.

Isaiah 6:5

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Holiness is linked to our time of worship. When we worship God a healthy reverential fear related to God's holiness is produced in our hearts and we fall on our face before God in reverence and awe for the wonder of His absolute purity and perfection. We fall before Him prostrate in confession and worship and come out of the experience a different person. This is life's greatest hour! It's a time when we see God for who He really is and allow God's character to impact our lives and transform us. It's a time when we enter into the wonder, amazement, and awe of God's holiness and allow God's holiness to change our lives forever.

Isaiah 6:8

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Isaiah had the holiness of God break through to his heart, which spawned this fear before the Lord. A confrontation with the holiness of God will keep us in the fear of God. Our eyes must see the King! And when this happens, we will develop a healthy fear of God in our lives. A right view of God's holiness will keep us in check. It will keep us in a state of reverence and respect toward God and will cause us to forsake those things in our lives that are unholy. The holiness of God will drive the skeletons out of the closet of our sinful lives. When we have a new awareness of God's holiness it will keep our lives in humility and surrender as evidenced by Isaiah's reaction to God's holiness.

When John was on the Isle of Patmos he saw a vision of the glorified Christ in all of His holiness. And the Scripture says that when John saw Him that he became as a "dead man" before his presence (Rev. 1:17). Like Isaiah (Isa. 6:5), John felt that reverential fear, accountability, and personal unworthiness before the awesome

presence of the holy Lord. This is the same worshipful experience we should have in our daily lives as we live and walk in the presence of God. We should have a constant awareness of God's holy presence that should cause us to curb our sinful lifestyles and honor Him with our decisions, attitudes, and lives.

There should be a sense of reverence toward God because of His majestic holiness, which promotes a healthy fear and alarm in our hearts, knowing that we are accountable before a holy God in this life, as well as the next life. We should not be so quick to sin knowing that God cannot be pleased with sin and that some day we will stand before God and be accountable for our lives in some measure.

Two young women lost their lives in a fire that swept through their apartment as they slept. Their home was equipped with a smoke detector that was in good working order, but it hadn't gone off. Why? Fire inspectors concluded that the safety device had been deactivated for a party that was held the night before. Someone had disconnected the unit to keep it from sounding off because of the smoke from cooking or candles.

As God's people, we must be careful that we do not deactivate the alarm system of the fear of God in our lives. We need to keep God's holiness before our eyes and respond accordingly to the character of God. A wholesome fear of God will keep us motivated and pure in life. It will drive or compel us to live for God in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation. The fear of God will keep our minds and music healthy and will motivate us to correct our lives in every area that needs correction.

Fearing God means that I possess reverence and respect toward the God, who is absolutely holy, knowing that He is not pleased with my life when I sin. This will do more for us than any seminar course that we could take today. If we want to be motivated in life we must learn to fear the Lord, which stems from viewing Him in all of His matchless holiness. This will cause us to adjust our lives and live for Him completely.

Luke 5:8 records:

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Many Christians talk and sing about the holiness of God. However, when the holiness of God really begins to break through to our hearts, it becomes a remarkably new revelation to us, so much so that we see our sinfulness, we fear God, and seek to live holy lives before Him in all that we do and say. I remember working a jackhammer years ago. My assignment was to break up the rocks underneath the ground so that pipe could be placed underneath the ground. It was a very hot day and the rocks were stubborn! I was greatly relieved when finally I could break through all the rocks and stones.

The point is this. Sometimes we must allow the holiness of God to break through our sinful lives and deceived hearts. And when we get a glimpse of God's holiness we will possess a reverential fear of God and seek to pattern our lives to His holy ways. What I am saying is that the glory of God's holiness must break through our stubborn heart and expose our sin as wicked and vile. We must understand that we are standing on holy ground (Exodus 3:5) and must live and walk (fellowship) in the presence of a holy God. And when you fully become aware of this, it's then that you will become a different person as a result of your holy confrontation with God. When the message and light of God's holiness breaks through to your heart you will begin to make changes in your life because you will possess a newfound reverence for God and a wholesome fear that a holy God will not put up with sin in your life.

The fear of God is then related to our times of worship when we see God afresh and anew as the great God of unsurpassed holiness, glory, and splendor. When we have a fresh vision of God it causes us to express holy reverence and worship to Him instead of the carnal worship, marketing techniques, and practices of man. It moves us to bow our heads in complete stillness, quietness, wonder, and praise.

A. W. Tozer said it best:

“But a man who has passed through the veil and looked even briefly upon the holy place of Isaiah's God can never be irreverent again.”

Dear friend, we must learn to live in awe of the holiness of God! When we live in the light of God's holiness we will practice the presence of God and live differently by molding our lifestyle to God's holiness. Like Isaiah, every believer should have an awareness of God's burning presence in his life. The tame God of relevance must be replaced by the true God whose very presence shatters our egos into dust, burns our sin into ashes, and strips us naked to reveal the real person within.

Now listen. When a person talks about God as "the man upstairs" he has no reverence for God. He has not known or seen the same God that Isaiah has witnessed. Furthermore, if the church would truly see the holiness of God again there would be an abrupt stop to all of the carnal music and pragmatic marketing games that the church is playing today. The fact is this. We would simply be stunned and changed forever by the presence of God's absolute holiness. God's great and magnificent holiness will cause us to express deep reverence for God and newfound commitment to His cause.

"How wondrous and great Thy works, God of praise!
How just, King of saints, and true are Thy ways!
O who shall not fear Thee, and honor Thy Name?
Thou only art holy, Thou only supreme."

2. There is a fear that governs behavior and conduct.

Nehemiah 5:15 says, "but so did not I, because of the fear of God." A healthy fear of God keeps us from doing those things that displease God. If our definition of fear stops at only reverencing God we have missed the complete Biblical definition of fearing God. A person may in some sense reverence God but not commit himself to God or want accountability before God. This is not true fear. When a person fears God they will allow the presence of a holy God to regulate or govern their conduct and behavior in life. They will place themselves under His authority. A God-fearing person is the type of person that practices reverential submission. A God-fearing person is a person who knows what God is like and who is then willing to comply to God's standard. In short, a proper and healthy fear of God will produce positive obedience, personal holiness, and a sense of the presence of God in one's life that will result in honoring God. It will

also cause a person to realize the pain that they cause God when sinning, the ploy of man's fear, and the prophetic fear one should possess in light of the future.

Let's explain how the fear of God governs behavior and conduct.

a. Positive obedience

Ecclesiastes 12:13 says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

Today the tendency is to lose all fear of God by thinking of Him as a doting grandfather and forgetting that He is the eternal, infinite, Creator to whom we are accountable. The Scriptures paint a clear picture that demonstrate how fearing God produces a change of living and conduct in our lives. When we fear God or possess an awareness of His holy presence and displeasure with sin (Hab. 1:13), we will seek to conform and pattern our lifestyle to God's holy character and be like God (Titus 2:11). Therefore, fearing God causes us to forsake sin, get right with God, and stay right with God! A person cannot have reverence for God and His holiness if he does not make himself accountable before God through obedience.

Joshua 24:14 says:

"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD."

Job 28:28 says:

"And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

Deuteronomy 6:2

"That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged."

Deuteronomy 6:24

“And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.”

Deuteronomy 8:6

“Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.”

Deuteronomy 10:12

“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

Deuteronomy 13:4

“Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.”

Deuteronomy 17:19

“And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.”

All these verses reveal that fearing God is linked to obedience and a commitment to God’s way for our lives. When we fear God we are practicing obedience to His commands. We will willingly say “yes” to all that God wants for our lives and commands us to do. Indeed, fearing God involves reverential submission to God’s purposes and ways. Fearing God does keep our lives in check.

Jim Elliot said:

“In reading the Scriptures I find a great moral power. Therein am I made aware of two great forces for good in human experience: the “fear” of God and the “grace” of God. Without the fear of God I should not stop at doing evil; the fear of God restrains from evil. Without the grace of God I should have no desire to approach positive goodness. The one is a deterrent from evil; the other an encouragement to good.”

Of course, it's also true that grace teaches us to deny a sinful life of ungodliness (Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:1-2, 14). However, Jim Elliot's point is valid for we have seen that a healthy fear of God also curtails sin and keeps us from straying from God. The two can work harmoniously together. Fear reminds us of the consequences of sinning against God whereas grace provides us with the reason for not sinning against God.

b. Personal holiness

Proverbs 9:10

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”

The fear of God is also tied to the concept of the holiness of God and the practice of personal separation from the world. This is because the fear of God relates to how a person lives. When a person fears God they will seek to live holy and right before God. Their actions will want to uphold and honor God's holiness.

The two concepts of fearing God and understanding God's holiness and personal holy living (“the knowledge of the holy”) are tied together. Do we really understand God's holiness today? Do we really want to live holy today? Not when we try to mix paganism with our preaching and times of worship (Rom. 12:2). Not when we attempt to unite the holy with the unholy (Lev. 10:10). Not when we think the end justifies the means (Rom. 3:8). Not when we mix a little sin with some obedience (Gal. 5:9). We are to obey God in every area of our lives for the simple reason that His holiness has made an impact upon our hearts and lives. We should want to obey God. Since God is holy or set apart from sin we too should be set apart from sin in our everyday living. Holiness demands obedience and separation from that which is wrong. A proper fear of God will spawn holiness and obedience in our lives. The old saying goes like this:

“They that would grow divinely wise,
Must with his fear begin;
Our fairest proof of knowledge lies
In hating every sin.”

Leviticus 19:14

“Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.”

Leviticus 19:32

“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.”

Leviticus 25:17

“Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God.”

In the above verses the fear of God is linked to obedient actions or doing what God says. Why? It's because God is God, that's why! God is holy and His holiness demands obedience to what is holy and right. Thus, when a person fears God he will live a godly life that properly represents God's holiness. The Bible states that God's holiness is the standard for human conduct and that men who truly fear God learn holiness, do what is right, and forsake sin. When we obey God and do what is right we are expressing a type of fear for God that governs our behavior in life.

We see who God is and then do what God wants us to do. Why? It's because God is holy and we fear Him, or express reverence and worship toward Him, we will want to also mold our conduct to His character and likeness (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:16). This is reverential submission. We possess an inward desire to obey God and follow His ways for our life. The Scofield Reference Bible calls the fear of God “a phrase of Old Testament piety, meaning reverential trust with hatred of evil.” When a person fears God they will depart from evil and do what is holy, right, and seek to honor to the revelation of God's Being and holy character.

2 Corinthians 7:1 says:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

If we truly fear God or possess a reverential fear toward God's holiness and unsurpassed purity, then we will clean house! We will

practice the presence of God and change the manner of our living and pattern our lifestyle to God's standard. If we are going to reach the goal to be more holy in everyday living, then we must learn the "fear of God." When we possess a reverence for God and His holiness we will then seek to duplicate that holiness in our lives. We will clean up our inward spiritual life ("spirit") and outward actions ("flesh"). Both our fleshly bodies and the spiritual part of our existence will reflect that we fear God. In other words, we will seek to be clean on the outside as well as on the inside.

c. Presence of God

There is a type of fear that governs our behavior. It's a fear that comes about when we possess a constant awareness of God's holy presence (Psalm 139:7-9). We are to live in the presence of God! When we live in the presence of God we will practice the presence of God. We are to live in such a way that God's holy presence is very real to us so that we in return seek to conform our conduct to God's holy character. God is watching us. He sees everything that we do. For this reason, we should live right and always do right. God knows who we are in the dark!

Hebrews 4:13 says:

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

"The eyes of God are upon me.
He sees everything I do.
And He knows where I am
He knows each thought that I might think."

God see everything that you do. Nothing escapes His watching eyes! Correctional officials can keep track of nonviolent criminals without having to keep them in prison by using advanced electronic surveillance devices. One of these systems consists of an electronic transmitter that is worn around the offender's ankle. It triggers an alarm if he violates the rules of his sentence by leaving home early, coming back late, or tampering with the device. Said one offender, "I don't feel like I'm in jail, but I do feel like I'm being watched."

In one sense, that's how we all should feel. Whether in prison, on the street, at work, or at home, we are all being watched. Even when there is no police car in sight or no surveillance camera in the store we are constantly being watched by God. Because we are accountable to God we should possess a wholesome fear of God that keeps our lives in check with His holy presence. The fear of God should regulate our conduct in life so that we forsake sin and do what is honoring to God. If we truly fear God as we should then we will forsake sin and do what is right and honor God's holiness. The fear of God ("I am afraid of him" – Job 23:15) is related to a continual awareness of the presence of God ("I am troubled at his presence" – Job 23:15) and honoring His holiness with obedience and conformity to His holy ways.

Moses knew what it was to live in the fear of God for he possessed a continual awareness of God's presence in his life. Hebrews 11:27 says: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." The Bible says that Moses forsook Egypt's ways for God's ways and did so based upon the fact that he knew the invisible God was watching him daily and was with him to help and empower him.

Do you have this same awareness? When you know that God is watching everything that you do you will stop sinning and start living a holy life. You will want to conform your life to God's character of holiness. Knowing that God is watching us and we are accountable to God is a motivational factor to live holy. When we sin we must remember that we sin against God (Psalm 51:4; Jer. 14:7; Luke 15:18). When we live in the presence of God and fear Him, we will not only respect or reverence His holiness, but also conform our patterns of living to match His character of holiness or purity. This is what it means to fear God. It means we will pattern our lives after God's holiness and honor Him in our actions, speech, and overall living. I am a "God fearing" person when I know that God is holy, that God is constantly watching me, that I am accountable to Him, and that I must conform my will and living to His holy will and standard. Let me repeat something I already said. When we live in the presence of God we will practice the presence of God. This means we will conform our lives to holiness.

“I cannot hide from God,
However I may try,
Tho’ mountains cover me;
I’ll not escape His eye.
I’ve wandered far and near,
And yet His voice I hear.
I know that I can never hide from God.
I cannot hide from Thee dear Lord,
To escape Thee so often I’ve tried.
No rest shall I know while here below,
Till in Christ my soul shall hide.”

Dear friend, we are to see “him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). We are to live as if we are looking at the face of God. We can’t really believe or possess faith that God watches us and not have it change our lives! If we say that we believe that God is always watching us and then live as though He is not then this becomes a mockery of faith. We should be affected by the presence of God! The presence of God should keep us steady and holy. When we see our sinfulness in light of God’s holiness as Isaiah did (Isaiah 6:5) we will come to the point and say, “I can’t do it Lord. I can’t sin against You any longer.”

When we have an awareness of God’s presence and offending His holiness we will possess a sensitivity to sin. We will learn to love the Lord and hate the evil (Ps. 97:10).

“I want a principle within
Of jealous, godly fear,
A sensibility of sin,
A pain to feel it near;

I want the first approach to feel
Of pride, or fond desire,
To catch the wandering of my will,
And quench the kindling fire.”

God’s people should rekindle the continual awareness that God is watching and weighing every one of my thoughts, words, actions and attitudes. Second Chronicles 16:9 says: “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth...” The eyes of God are upon

me. He sees everything I do! We cannot escape His holy look and His look of disfavor when we sin against His will and Word. Because of this, God's people should learn to blush at sin once again and possess a healthy fear of God, which should motivate and compel us to live holy lives. The sad picture of the church today is that we no longer blush at sin. We don't find sin disgusting, despicable, and disheartening for we have lost sight of the fear of God. We have lost sight of how holy God is; how terrible it is to offend God and His holiness. Like Isaiah, we must return to blushing over our sin. We should blush over our sin when we remember that we sin in the presence of God (Ps. 139:7) and the heavenly angels (1 Cor. 11:10).

“O be careful little hands what you do,
O be careful little hands what you do,
For the Father up above is looking down in love
So be careful little hands what you do.”

“O be careful little eyes what you see,
O be careful little eyes what you see,
For the Father up above is looking down in love
So be careful little eyes what you see.”

“O be careful little ears what you hear,
O be careful little ears what you hear,
For the Father up above is looking down in love
So be careful little ears what you hear.”

Colossians 3:22 says:

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.”

We now go to the work force. How does the fear of God help me to work effectively on the job? The fear of God in our hearts helps us to work in the everyday world knowing that we are ultimately accountable to God for our actions and work habits. We must do our jobs with an awareness of God's holy character and presence. This means that as we work we must do so respecting authority and obeying those who are above us. And we must do so with the fear of God in our hearts. This means that we will deeply reverence God for

His holiness and possess a fear knowing about God's reprisal for disobedience against authority. The fear of God promotes obedience to authority. And we must remember that God is not pleased when we disobey authority.

This reverence of God's character, our accountability to Him, and the constant reminder of His loving reprisal against sin will keep us from getting out of order on the job and throwing our hammer across the room. It will keep us straight and up front in all that we do and say while obeying and respecting the authority.

God sees you. He is observing you. In those secret places and moments God is there! God is looking! God is seeing! When we sin we dare to do it in front of God! We sin in the very presence of God's holiness. This truth should cause us to stop sinning and start living to please God. It should cause us to fear God's awesome holy presence among our lives and do what is right. The invisible God should change the way we live!

Dear friend, did you ever stop and think that when you sin before the face and holy presence of God that you hurt and offend God? You offend His holy character and purpose for your life. This should cause us to reverence Him and become obedient to His will and purpose for our lives.

d. Painful hurt of God

Fearing God is reverential submission to Him and His ways knowing that if we sin we will break the heart of God. We cause God pain and hurt when we break His commandments and live for ourselves. The fact that God never changes does not mean God does not have emotions and feelings. God said that "I am broken with their whorish heart which hath departed from me" (Ezek. 6:9). God's heart is crushed or broken when we sin in His presence. God has feelings. He can be hurt.

Ephesians 4:30 says:

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

God can be grieved. God can cry. Jesus wept! We fear God when we recognize that what we do will offend Him or grieve His loving heart. The fear of God is the wholesome dread of not pleasing God with our lives. It is a healthy respect and reverence for God's holiness that compels us to live right, do right, and be right in order to please God instead of hurt God.

G. Campbell Morgan said:

"Once we had fear that he would hurt us, but now we should fear lest we hurt him."

The fear of the Lord is not the fear that God might hurt us but rather the fear that we might hurt Him! How very true this is. When we sin we sin against God and grieve His presence in our lives through the Spirit's ministry and life.

e. Ploy of man's fear

Instead of allowing a healthy fear of God to govern and change our conduct we often allow the fear of man to reshape our conduct. How often do we try and please others instead of remembering what is most important in life – fearing God and pleasing Him? How often do we fear the repercussions of what other people think or what they will do instead of fearing God or respecting His holiness and honoring Him by our decisions and actions?

Proverbs 29:25

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe."

When we fear man instead of God we find ourselves in a trap. The ploy or trap of man's fear is this: we seek to please man instead of God, end up following the world, and miss out on God's goals and future reward for our lives. The fear of man is transient and has imperfect goals. When we fear the repercussions of what people will think, or might do to our lives if we don't follow their path, then we allow the fear of man to become a snare or trap that keeps us from doing God's will for our lives. You cannot fear man and God at the same time! When we fear man we cannot trust God or express faith

in God's power and provision for our lives ("but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe").

Many times we feel that we need to go with the crowd or the status quo because we are afraid. What are we afraid of anyway? We are afraid of man. We are afraid what man may say to us, think about us, or how he might treat us. We are afraid of the results of standing up for God. Instead of daring to be a Daniel (Dan. 1:8) we fear what man might do to us. You see, the fear of man becomes a snare or trap that keeps us from accomplishing God's goal and purpose for our lives. Dear friend, when we fear what man thinks, says, or does to us we will find ourselves not fearing God and not doing what is right.

When we think of the fear of man we can't help but think of Simon Peter denying Christ while warming his hands at the world's fire (Luke 22:56-63). During Moses' first flight from Egypt the Bible says that "Moses feared" and "Moses fled" (Exodus 2:14-15) from Egypt. Why? It's because he had fallen into the snare of man's fear. Instead of trusting in God he feared what Pharaoh might do to him after killing the Egyptian. That fear led him into the wilderness for forty years. However, after his learning experience, Moses knew that the fear of man had become a snare in his life. Therefore, he came back to Egypt in the power of God to deliver his people. Instead of fearing Pharaoh he feared God more. Moses did not want to displease God by failing to do His will and what was right. For this reason, he faced Pharaoh boldly and confidently knowing that the invisible God was watching him and was on his side (Heb. 11:27).

When God is on your side you can't lose! On this occasion Moses feared Pharaoh so little because he feared God so much. He kept his eyes on "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (1 Tim. 6:15, 16).

You will remember that the Israelites were instructed by Joshua and Caleb not to fear the people of Canaan (Numbers 14:8-9). The same is true today. Christians must not fear their adversaries around them, nor the task before them. God expects His people to understand that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Hebrews 13:6 says:

“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Psalms 118:6

“The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”

Many times we fear what man might say or how he might respond to a right decision and godly course of action that we take. Instead of realizing that God will help us through life when we make the right decisions to live for Him we fear what others will say, do, or think. Believers basically have two great snares today. They are the fear of man (Prove. 29:25) and the praise of man (John 12:43). Like Moses, we must trust the Lord and be more concerned about securing His approval instead of man’s approval (Gal. 1:10). Let us remember that there is a higher court than man’s assessments of our lives and what matters most in life is not the praise of man but the blessing and approval of God. We are going to stand before the Lord someday – not man. This is why we should fear God and do what is right instead of fearing what man might say or do to us. We should also cultivate the friendships of people that are God-fearing in their approach to life.

Psalms 119:63

“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”

Our closest friends and true companions in life need to be those who truly fear God and who want to do what is right. When we develop close companionships with those who do not fear God their lifestyle can rub off on us (1 Cor. 15:33). We can begin to fear what our friends think instead of what God thinks. We can begin to fear our friend’s reactions instead of God’s reactions. Eventually the fear of man overtakes our lives and we are no longer living with a healthy fear of offending God and His holiness and striving to only please Him (Prov. 16:7; John 8:29; 2 Thess. 2:4).

“Living for Jesus, a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad hearted and free,

This is the pathway of blessing for me.
O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me.
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne.
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.”

Samuel Johnson noted that shame arises from the fear of men, but conscience, from the fear of God. When a person fears God they will possess a tender conscience toward God and offending Him and His holiness.

Acts 24:16

"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

We need to be God-fearing people today. When we truly fear God and His opinion of our lives we will want to conform or pattern our lives after His holiness and will. In short, we will no longer fear man but fear God. We will no longer care how others seem to be prospering and advancing in life. We will only care about one thing – fearing God and doing what is right.

Proverbs 23:17

“Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.”

f. Prophetic fear

Paul connects the fear of God with the believer’s future or prophetic judgment. Paul contemplated that future time when he would stand before the Lord and this day aroused a reverential and accountable fear in his heart before God. There should be a future or prophetic fear that hovers over our heart and lives while we live for God in the present hour. We should live knowing that someday we will be examined for how we have lived and conducted ourselves as Christians. Paul knew that someday he would be examined in relationship to his overall conduct and life. We are told to possess a healthy fear in connection with our future examination at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10-11

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”

Paul uses the word “terror” when contemplating the time he will stand before Jesus Christ as his judge. The word “terror” once again speaks of the reverential awe and sense of accountability that Paul possessed before God which caused him to serve the Lord and to please Him by his life. The thought of one day standing before his Lord (2 Cor. 5:10) created a sense of awe and accountability before God or a healthy fear in his heart. It was the contemplation of that moment that moved Paul to fear the Lord and impelled him on in His service.

This is not the terror of being condemned and judged for his sins but the wholesome terror or healthy contemplation of meeting Jesus someday and disappointing Him for not witnessing and working for the Lord. This is why Paul says that out of this fear “we persuade men.” This is the fear of not hearing those words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” It’s the fear of being ashamed at His coming (1 John 2:28). It’s the fear of seeing disappointment in the eyes of the Lord. It’s the fear of not having done what we could, when we could, with what we had. It’s the fear of missing out on eternal reward (1 Cor. 9:27).

Oh friend, all of us should possess a godly fear in light of the coming examination of believers at the Bema Seat or Judgment Seat of Christ. We will stand before Him someday and this should cause us to reverence and please Christ today so that we might find His favor, blessing, and praise in the final day of examination.

The fear of God should motivate us to keep our ducks in a row in view of Christ’s coming and our accountability before Him in that future day when we stand before Him. In this text, Paul connects the fear of God with the believer’s judgment (2 Cor. 5:10). It’s the healthy fear that reminds us that we must stand before God someday and give an account of our lives as Christians. It’s the fear of being

ashamed before this judgment and experiencing the Lord's disfavor for a life that has been neglected for the Master.

1 John 2:28

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”

The confidence that John is referring to is the confidence of knowing that we are living holy lives and that Jesus would be pleased with our lives if He would return today. There is a healthy fear that should accompany our Christian lives when we know that we are doing wrong. It's the fear that God is not pleased with us and that Jesus may return at any moment and not be pleased with the way that we are living. It's the fear of being ashamed before Him when we stand there and give account of our lives. It's the fear of having our hands in the cookie jar when Jesus returns!

We cannot hastily dismiss this type of fear as an important part of the fear of God. Let me reiterate. This is not the fear of eternal judgment and separation from God. A believer in Christ need not fear that God will judge him for his sins since Jesus was already judged on his behalf (1 Pet. 3:18). But this speaks of possessing a wholesome fear that God is not pleased with our lives and will reward us according to what we have done for Him. This is why Solomon said:

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

This verse sums up how important the fear of God is to be in our lives today. Solomon realized that the only thing that is ever going to matter for time and eternity is that we fear God and obey what He wants us to do. The fear of God motivates us to keep God's commandments so that we can live to please Him. This is the clearest expression of what God wants us to do. Somehow Solomon realized that we would all be accountable to God. And because of this we need to fear God or develop this sense of reverence toward His

holy character so that we might adjust our lives to His will and receive reward for living for Jesus. The fear of God is to be a constant motivation for our lives since it is connected with our accountability before God not only in this life but the life to come.

James 5:9

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.”

The Bible says that we should not hold grudges or possess feelings of bitterness, resentment, or faulty criticism in light of our accountability to Christ as our coming Judge. God has not called us to be groaners. Why? It's because Jesus is coming again. Judge Jesus is standing at the door ready to return and when He comes back we will be immediately ushered into His presence. The coming of Christ and our accountability to Him should promote a healthy fear in our lives.

Would you want to be found with resentment or animosity in your heart toward another person when Jesus returns? Jesus will not excuse you for bitterness. We all have those people that we could be bitter against but Jesus says, “Don't be bitter for I'm coming back to check you out. Get rid of your grudges.” Do you want to be found with a bitter spirit when I return? Furthermore, do you want to be in Church on Sunday or home watching football on TV when Jesus returns? Would you want to be found sitting around and excusing yourself from God's house, God's will, and God's best for your life when Jesus returns? Listen, a healthy fear of our accountability before Jesus Christ should motivate us to be living for Him. The Bible suggests this in many places.

Jonathan Edwards, one of the great preachers of early American history, once made this resolution: "Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of life."

What would you have done differently this past week if you knew it would be your last week to live? What would you do differently if you knew that Jesus was coming back on Sunday or Monday? I can guarantee you that if we knew that Jesus was going to return this Sunday that everyone who is on our church membership would be in

church and they would give sacrificially. They would not excuse themselves but make sure that they were doing what they knew they should be doing. They wouldn't bypass church so easily. They wouldn't bypass opportunities to serve and live for the Lord. Why? Because deep down we all know that we are accountable to Him. The Judge is standing at the door. Here comes the Judge! Someday we are going to stand before the Lord and give an account of our lives. There should be a healthy and motivating fear connected with our lives. We will one day be made accountable for our lives. Because of this we need to wake up, confess up, get up, light up, and pick up our lives and do what is right.

The fear of God brings a sense of accountability before the Lord. We should have a healthy fear of God in our hearts today. It's this fear that motivates our lives and stirs us on to live for God. To think that we will stand before God and be accountable to Him for the way we have lived is an awesome thing. Once again, this does not mean that we will be judged for our sins as believers but it does suggest that we should have a healthy fear for God knowing that God will one day examine our lives and see how faithful we have been for Him (1 Cor. 4:2).

We should develop a healthy fear toward God, understanding that He is not pleased with sin in our life and will not be pleased with us when we stand before Him, if we have failed to devote and surrender our lives to Him. The fear of God and our accountability toward the Lord is a motivation factor for our lives. Is a holy God pleased with my life today? Will a holy God be pleased with my life in the future when I stand before Him?

1 Peter 1:17 says:

“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”

If we call God our heavenly Father, then we should possess a healthy fear of Him and obey Him. This is the same kind of fear that a son would possess toward a firm but loving earthly father. People say that we can't fear someone and love them at the same time. This is not true. A child loves his daddy even when his daddy must discipline

him. Why? Because the child knows that he is cared for enough to be looked after and redirected when doing wrong. In a similar way the Christian is to be captivated with loving Jesus Christ (1 John 4:19) without reservation (Rom. 7:4), even when the Lord chooses to discipline his life. The truth of the matter is this. We love God because He chooses to love us enough to correct our lives (Heb. 12:6).

In 1 Peter 1:17 we are once again reminded to possess a godly fear in our hearts, as we live out our pilgrim lives on earth, in view of God's assessment and judgment of our works, both in this life and in the next life. In view of God's holy assessment of our lives we should hate sin and vice and avoid all those things that would displease God. We should fear God by possessing a reverent submission to His holiness and seek to please Him in all that we do. We should be afraid to do anything that might disappoint God! Dear friend, remember that God has a heart that can be broken. God is holy. We are accountable to Him. God is watching us. We should reverence God and do what is right. We should practice reverent submission. All of these concepts are included in the Biblical teaching concerning the fear of God. We now have one more truth to study in regards to fearing God.

“How careful, then, ought I to be;
With what religious fear,
Who such a strict account must give
For my behavior here.”

3. There is a fear that knows of God's reprisal.

If I fear God I am genuinely afraid of the consequences of disobeying him. We can't dismiss this aspect of the fear of God in relationship to the believer's life. The believer should possess a fear of the consequences of sin in his life. The early church understood about this aspect of the fear of God when God as the beginning of the church judged a married couple for sin in the congregation.

Acts 5:5

“And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.”

Acts 5:11 further states:

“And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.”

This was more than just a reverential type of fear. It was a healthy fear that God does not allow sin to go unchecked forever. It was the fear of God’s reprisal or judgment upon our lives for living independent of Him and straying far from His will and purpose for our lives. A fear of God must also include the fear of God’s reprisal when a person stubbornly continues in rebellion and sin. The fear of God provides a check and balance system upon our lives. This has always been true. The fear of God also suggests that we should reverence God with a sense of wholesome fear and alarm in our hearts, knowing that God is not pleased with sin in our lives, and that God can bring His temporal judgments against sin. Noah feared what God said and knew that if he didn’t get his ark built he would be going down under with the rest of the people.

Hebrews 11:7

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

Noah not only expressed a reverential fear of God and a sense of accountability toward Him, but also the fear of God’s reprisal and temporal judgment upon him and his family, if he refused to build the ark. He did not just look up into the heavens and say, “God I express reverence toward you.” He also looked down on the earth and said, “God, I need to build a ship or my family is going under.” The Bible says that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8) but this did not cause Noah to lose sight of a God who knows how to send judgment. Don’t misunderstand what I’m saying. God is not waiting around ready to hit His own people over the head with a club every time they sin. If that were the case, we would all have concussions. However, when a believer stubbornly continues in sin (Ps. 78:8) he opens himself up to God’s chastening hand (Deut. 28:47-49). This has always been true in both Old and New Testaments.

Habakkuk 1:13 says this about God: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.” Let us remember that God can never look upon sin with His favor or blessing. When His own children persist in sin God has a way of plaguing them (Ex. 32:35) and destroying their golden calf (Ex. 32:20). He does not allow sin to go unchecked without heartache and His discipline. There is a price to pay when we stubbornly persist in sin.

Exodus 32:35 records:

“And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.”

a. The reprisal of God's discipline

Hebrews 12:5-7

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”

Inseparably tied with the fear of God is the discipline of God. Paul talks about God's discipline upon the lives of His children for their erring ways. And all of this is given to us so that we might allow the fear and discipline of God to motivate us to live holy lives. The Bible says that “ye have forgotten.” This is our problem. We have forgotten! We have forgotten the teaching that God does chastise our lives. This is a teaching that promotes a healthy fear of God that is related to His reprisal.

My friend, Paul was motivated to live right because of God's paddle. He knew that a holy God does not put up with unholy living. This means that when I stray and am fully aware that I am running away from the Lord and from what I know is right, that God will come after me to discipline my life in some measure. We must remember that God does not put up with children who are running away from Him and who are not interested in what He wants them to do or how to live. We might say “Yes I will” but after a bit God says, “No you won't!” God must take us to the woodshed and give us a good working over.

And God does this in many ways. Sometimes He causes great conviction to swell up in our hearts. Other times He must allow some tragedy to occur in our lives to get our attention. God spans His children in many ways and uses many avenues to get our attention that only He knows about.

New Evangelicalism and the modern church have forgotten this exhortation today. They stress that God is kind and somehow overlooks our faults and failures. When we run from Him, He lets us wallow in our sin, and then pats us on the back reminding us to come back into fellowship with Him someday. But the Bible reminds us that God does not allow His children to play in the traffic. He comes after us and says, "What are you doing out there on the road? Why are you playing in the traffic? Get into the woodshed and bring a stick along with you when you come in." God does not tell us to go stand in the corner. He does not count to ten on His fingers. God simply takes action and disciplines our lives so that we might stop running from Him.

Hebrews 12:6

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Jonah found this to be true. God came after Him with a great fish and swallowed him up (Jonah 1:17). God chases those children who are clearly running from Him. And you can be sure that God has a fish for you if you are running away from His holy plan and will for your life. And you are going to be swallowed up. After a while God says, "Enough is enough!"

The old forgotten verse in the Bible is Numbers 32:23:

"But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out."

God is saying to His children that the appropriate punishment for their sin will be meted out upon them. Whatever a man sows he must also reap (Gal. 6:7-8). This is an axiom of Scripture. God allows sin to catch up with our lives as part of His chastening hand. God knows how to chasten His children and bring His punishment upon them

according to what they have done. Sometimes He even takes His children home prematurely (1 Cor. 11:29-30; 1 John 5:16). Of course, all of this is done within the boundaries of God's chastising purposes. The believer must be reminded that God's discipline is a very real thing. It cannot be overlooked. God still disciplines our lives in the present dispensation. As a loving Father, the Lord must sometimes spank us in order to keep our lives in check. And when we are stubborn and persist in sin we can expect God's chastising hand upon us.

Hebrews 12:9

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

Paul says that earthly fathers spank their kids. By the way dad, God expects you to do it. Don't you sit by and allow that son or daughter of yours to become a hell raiser and a spoiled brat. You may say, "Preacher, I don't like you for saying that." That's okay for the devil doesn't like me either. As a parent your responsibility is to whip your child for acts of disobedience. And it should be done in love and with the view to bring understanding about disobedience and right actions.

You will note that correction comes before reverence ("which corrected us, and we gave them reverence"). The Fathers were to correct their children so they would teach them respect and reverence for authority and what is right. The verse speaks about correction, then reverence and subjection. And this is the way that it works. We must learn to correct so that our children will learn to reverence us as parents and be in subjection to us. That may not be in the humanist edition of child rearing today but it is in God's timeless edition of His Word!

Drawing on the analogy of the discipline of earthly fathers, Paul encourages us to possess a reverent and respectful attitude toward God our heavenly Father for His discipline in our lives. As the Father corrects our lives by discipline we have learned to reverence Him (His holiness and purity) and become in subjection to Him. As we were in "subjection" to our earthly father through discipline so we should be to our heavenly Father. As His children, we develop respect and

reverence that we gain toward the Lord through His discipline in our lives.

A paddle is still the best way to get a child motivated! The same is true in the spiritual realm. God's paddle should motivate us to get our lives in order. And we must experience our share of discipline from God so that we might understand that He does not want us to play in the traffic. God disciplines us so that we do not live unholy lives separate from His holy standards and will.

Hebrews 12:10

“For they (earthly fathers) verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”

Christians must allow God's discipline to have its full effect and be trained by it. God's discipline trains us to live a holy life and the fear of this discipline helps us to develop holy pathways in our lives. A healthy fear of God's reprisal motivates us to do right, live right, and be right. Most of us have experienced discipline from our human fathers. We did not interpret this as a sign that they hated us. We realized that they were interested in our welfare, and we paid them respect.

Hebrews 12:6

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

We should understand that God loves us when He disciplines our lives. And because of His chastening hand upon our lives we should fear God and submit to the Father of our own human spirit (Heb. 12:9).

The Presbyterian minister Paul Dwight Moody, son of the famous evangelist, gave a touching account of how his dad demonstrated the Heavenly Father's loving concern for His children. The incident happened when Paul was only 10 years old, but the influence of that event left an indelible impression on his young life. He wrote, "My father had told me to go to bed, but I misunderstood. I thought he meant after I had finished my conversation with a young friend who

was visiting our home with an older person. So I continued talking and having fun. A little later he came into the room again and saw that I had not obeyed him. Speaking with that directness of which he was capable, he ordered me to bed at once. His brusque tone of voice was new to me, and I retreated, frightened and in tears. But before I had time to fall asleep, he was at my bedside. He explained that he had reprimanded me because I had disobeyed him, but this in no way indicated that he didn't love me. As he knelt to pray with me, I noticed that tears were falling down over his rugged, bearded face. "That was nearly half a century ago," Paul Moody continued, "but I'll never forget the scene. My father had unknowingly awakened within me the consciousness of the love of God. No sermon on the Lord's compassion for His children has cast so much light on that subject as my dad's huge figure sympathetically bending over my bed in the twilight."

Psalm 19:9 links a healthy fear of the Lord with His judgments when it says: "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." We would do well to link the fear of God's reprisal with our definition of fear. Any definition of fearing God that leaves out the aspect of fear related to God's reprisal has a hole in its definition. Every believer must have a sense of God's chastening hand as every child would have of a father who loves him.

b. The reprisal of God's vengeance

Hebrews 10:30-31 says:

"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

This Scripture passage is dealing with Christians who have fallen into the hands of the living God. It is not talking about apostates. Many have misunderstood the epistle of Hebrews. To fall into the hands of somebody is to come under his authority and be under his temporal disciplinary judgment. The reference to the Lord's people in the Old Testament quote (vs. 30) informs us that the Scripture is alluding to a judgment connected with God's own people. It is the chastisement of erring children who have a saving relationship with Him that is in

view. God's people have fallen into His hands and are now placed under His authority and jurisdiction. This means that they will experience His manifold temporal judgments upon their lives if they fail to live holy lives.

There is nothing in this passage of Scripture that intends to convey that a saved person could be lost. Rather, the writer extends this warning to these believers to remind them that God must be feared in the Christian life. All who profess the name of Christ (2 Tim. 2:19) should remember that there are temporal (not eternal) consequences for turning away from the Lord and seeking to live our lives independent of the Lord.

God does not leave His people wallow in sin forever without catching up with them and disciplining them. God Himself has claimed the right to take vengeance and to judge His people (vs. 30). In saying this, the author quoted twice from Deuteronomy (32:35-36), a chapter which most vividly evokes the picture of God's people suffering His retributive judgments (see especially Deut. 32:19-27). In this verse we see that God does judge His people. And in our relationship with the Lord there should be a healthy fear of the Lord and His reprisal upon our lives when we stubbornly persist in sin.

We always know that God loves us (2 Thess. 2:16) but this should not take away from the fact that God is also a holy God that must be feared. We need not cringe in terror thinking that God is determined to beat us into the ground every time we fail Him. God is not like this (Psalm 103:8; James 5:11). But at the same time we must live day to day realizing that a holy God does not put up with sin and will not allow us to continue in sin without His loving response to correct us.

“There is a God who reigns above,
Lord of the heaven and earth and seas;
I fear His wrath, I ask His love
And with my lips I sing His praise.”

Thank the Lord that even David realized that God does not deal with us according to our sins when it comes to eternal judgment.

Psalm 103:10 says:

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

How wonderful and glorious this is! Nevertheless, this truth does not rule out the forgotten truth that God is holy, that He is never pleased with sin, and we must deal with sin as it invades our lives. He must convict us about sin and discipline our lives because of sin. God does not allow sin to go unchecked in His children’s lives forever. And in the end we will be examined for the kind of life that we have lived before the Lord down here upon the earth.

Last spring a country man in Oklahoma encountered the wrath of a tornado. He said, "One personal encounter with a power that before was only theoretical can make all the difference. You live differently after that. You respect the power. You live in awe of its presence and tremble to think of its potential. Above all else, you live in profound humility because you recognize your inability to control it."

This is a wise saying. And this should be true of the Christian life in relationship to God’s holiness and power. We should live in respect of God's holiness and power over our lives. We should live in awe and with the understanding of His right to discipline our lives. If we can fear and respect tornadoes, then how much more should we fear the Almighty God who made the tornadoes!

The motivational force of God’s fear operating in our lives will keep us from straying from God and living independent of Him. A reverent and respectful understanding of God’s holiness will lead us to the place where we will want to forsake sin instead of committing acts of sin. It will drive us to a place where we will want to keep our lives in check before His holy presence. In short, we will want to practice the presence of God. A proper healthy fear of God will reshape our living, cause us to forsake sin, and redirect our lives toward holy conduct.

Proverbs 16:6 says, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.”

Proverbs 3:7 also states: “Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”

The fear of God cleans up our lives. Nehemiah 5:15 says, “but so did not I, because of the fear of God.” Do you want to see some changes in your children’s lives and your own personal life? Then start studying about God’s holiness and how He is not pleased with sin. The holiness of God and our attitude of fear toward Him will motivate us to get the sin out of our lives and get going for God so that He is pleased with us. This should cause a sense of awesome reverence and alarm in our hearts toward a God who is involved in our lives. He is not some heavenly push-over sitting up there on a throne that will allow sin and disobedience to run rampant in our lives. He is a God of absolute holiness that must react to unholy actions and who loves us and will not allow us to live a life of rebellion against Him. The fear of God will keep us from wandering or straying from God.

Jonathan Edwards, one of the great preachers of early American history, once made this resolution: "Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of life." We have already stated that a person cannot have reverence for God and His holiness if he does not make himself accountable before God through obedience. The two must go hand in hand, both reverence and accountability. When we make ourselves accountable before God we know that there are repercussions for disobeying God and offending His holiness. The fear of God does mean that we are to reverence God for His character and holiness. But this fear also suggests that we should reverence God with a sense of wholesome fear and alarm in our hearts, knowing that God is not pleased with sin in our lives, and that He can bring His temporal judgments against sin!

Oswald Chambers said:

“The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.”

I’m convinced that the Old and New Testament concept behind the word “fear” not only means to have deep reverence or respect toward God but also points to being afraid and frightened of the temporal

consequences, which our wickedness and sin can bring upon our lives, due to God's chastening and chastising hand.

Psalm 2:11

"Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

Jesus said in Revelation 2:5:

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

God still does have the words "or else" in his vocabulary. This is a warning of His reprisal or judgment. Any healthy fear of God includes not only a reverential fear of God's holiness but also a fear of God's disfavor and reprisal when we stubbornly reject His will and plan for our lives. Although the unsaved do not fear God, as they should (Rom. 3:18), fearing God is the duty of those who are saved (Ps. 34:9; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 2:17; Heb. 12:28). This fear includes then a reverential submission to God and reprisal fear for refusing to submit to God. The fear of God works both ways. It begins with reverence but also includes reprisal for not obeying.

4. There is a fear that relates to loving God.

Deuteronomy 10:12

"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

These two concepts of loving and fearing God are not incompatible. The Bible is very clear on the matter of loving God and fearing Him. God speaks with authority and says that when a person fears God he will also love God. The two are linked together. Loving God and fearing God came from the lips of the Lord at the same time. Dear friend, if you don't love God you won't fear God and do what is right. If you love sin and wickedness more than you love God, then you will not fear God or reverence God for His holiness and have a sensibility to sin and God's presence in your life. But if you love Him for creating you, saving you, and loving you (1 John 4:19) then you will love Him in return. My friend, fearing God comes from a loving response

toward God. I fear Him because I love Him. I have a sense of His presence in my life and dread the thought of breaking His heart and offending His holiness because I love Him so dearly.

Psalm 18:1-2

“I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.”

Jesus said in Matthew 22:37:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

My friend, when we sin the night away we do so because we don't love Him. We don't love the One who gave us life. We don't love the Lover of our souls. Love is why we fear God. A child who loves his father will respect his father. He will also possess a sensitivity to sin and accountability to his father. The same is true in the Christian life. We love God the Father and because of this we have a sense of His presence, we reverence Him, and we know that we are accountable to Him. But all of it comes from our loving connection with the Lord. Today we are “married to another, even to him” (Rom. 7:4) and we are to possess an intimate loving relationship with Jesus Christ like a wife and husband would in a marriage. My friend, let's get loving Him today. We might as well not talk about the fear of God unless we love Him in our Christian lives. When we love Him we will fear Him and serve Him the rest of our lives.

O how I fear thee, living God,
With deepest, tenderest fears,
And worship thee with trembling hope
And penitential tears!
Yet I may love thee too, O Lord,
Almighty as thou art,
For thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart.

When studying the contexts of those texts of Scripture that contain the concept of “fearing God” we can arrive at this working definition of what it means to fear God as a believer.

“The fear of God is an awesome reverence for God that is created in a person’s heart and life when they possess a continual love for God, a sensitivity, tender conscience, awareness, and accountability to the presence of God’s sovereign, glorious, holy, and majestic Person, which in return, results in adoration, awe, submissive obedience, honoring God’s holiness, and possessing a healthy concern of doing something that might not please God. The fear of God is a wholesome dread of not pleasing God with our lives knowing that when we sin God is offended and that God loves us enough to chasten our lives. Fearing God means that a person lives in the reality of God’s holiness. It’s a healthy respect and reverence for God’s holiness that compels us to live right, do right, and be right (reverential submission), in order to please God, instead of hurt God, and keep ourselves from experiencing God’s reprisal.”

Fear and the Unbeliever’s Life

The believer possesses an inner awareness or sense of God’s reprisal in his life if he sins and goes against the Father’s will. However, it’s not the same awareness that an unbeliever has who does not have God as his Father and Jesus as his Savior. The Father says to the believer, “I may hurt you but I won’t harm you.” This is true in a spiritual sense. God’s discipline of the believer’s life is that of a loving father and no true father will ever disown his child (Heb. 13:5). The believer fears the loving hand of a Father’s discipline (Heb. 12:6) whereas the unbeliever who does not have his sins forgiven fears the hand of God’s eternal judgment.

Revelation 14:6-7

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

Before some of the greatest judgments of the Tribulation Period fall upon the world, an angel will stand up and proclaim that the unregenerate or unsaved world should fear God, and come to the

place of salvation. The Gospel is the “everlasting gospel” (vs. 6) because it provides the means to eternal life. It is the good news that God will forgive all the sins of those who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. It is the good news of forgiveness and eternal life. The angel will declare that people are sinners, facing eternal judgment in hell, but that God has provided the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ to save them from hell. The angel’s stern warning is that the Creator is also the Judge; He is the one people should fear and worship, rather than Satan and Antichrist. As the world teeters on the brink of final disaster, God graciously offers people another chance to repent.

As earth’s darkest hour approaches, the angel will proclaim the good news that it is not too late to be saved. There is still time to be saved before God’s judgment resumes. The angel’s message to sinners is that they might “Fear God, and give glory to him” (vs. 7). Refusing to give God glory is at the core of man’s prideful rebellion against God so the angel will call the unsaved people of the world to change their allegiance from the beast to the Lamb. He will urge them to no longer fear, reverence, and worship Satan and Antichrist, but instead to fear, reverence, and honor God by turning to His Son Jesus Christ for salvation.

The world is told to “fear God” or see God for who He really is – the true God of absolute sovereignty, holiness, and judgment. You will notice that the world is called upon to fear God in light “of his judgment” (vs. 7). There is then a proper fear that should enter the hearts of the unsaved regarding God’s holiness and judgment for not being prepared to meet God. The unsaved should fear God as their coming Judge and the condemnation that awaits them outside of salvation and Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:28:

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Jesus was actually speaking to His disciples when He said these words. Of course, the disciples themselves were not to possess the fear of hell’s condemnation but a reverential fear of God’s authority

and power over the souls of all people – both saved and unsaved. God would spare their soul since man can only kill the body but He would not spare the body or the souls of the unsaved since He would cast them into eternal judgment and misery. In other words, Jesus reminded them that it was more important to fear God instead of what people think about them (vs. 22), since God is the One who has authority over their own soul and the souls of those who will someday face their eternal condemnation in hell (Gehenna). It should be noted that God is the One who has authority to cast men into hell and not Satan, since Satan himself will be cast into everlasting fire. The point is this. To God alone belongs the power of the second death (Rev. 1:18). The disciples should express reverence toward God who is a righteous God of judgment.

The word “destroy” (ruin) does not mean to annihilate a person so that he ceases to exist but speaks of a person missing out on God’s original design and purpose for his life which is to enjoy eternal life in the presence of God. A person experiences God’s judgment in a literal burning hell apart from God’s existence and heaven (2 Thess. 1:9). Please notice again that these words were actually spoken to the disciples who were to relay what Jesus said about hell to everyone (“Preach ye upon the housetops” – vs. 27). This means that the disciples were to share the message of fearing God with the unsaved as they broadcasted the message of salvation and forgiveness from the rooftops. Every lost person needs to come to the place where they fear God if they are ever going to be saved. They must fear the judgment of God as the context reveals. They must fear the God who is in control of the destiny of their souls. They must fear hell, hopelessness, damnation, darkness, and eternal fire apart from God.

Luke 12:4-5 records a few more words:

“And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”

If you are unsaved today, you should fear God. You should fear God for He still is a God of judgment. You can’t get past it in Scripture unless you choose to bury your head in liberalism, modernism, and

humanism. Jesus says, "I say unto you. Fear him." When Jesus says something you should perk up your ears. You should fear the next life and entering a burning hell without hope if you are not prepared to meet God through salvation in Jesus Christ. The fear of God's judgment and the fear of a burning hell of fire and brimstone should scare you (Rev. 20:11-15). When I thought of an iron burning me and then thought of hell it frightened me and I knew I would someday suffer God's vengeance if I did not repent of my sins and come to simple faith in Christ.

When Jonathan Edwards preached "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" the people were terrified with a fear of God. They were so afraid that it is recorded that some held onto the church pillars for fear of the ground opening under their feet and hell swallowing them up!

Dear friend, someday you will wind up in this awful place of judgment if you die without believing in Jesus Christ as your only Savior (Acts 16:31) or transferring your faith only to Christ for your salvation (2 Tim. 1:12). God wants to save you today by His grace through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ His Son (Eph. 2:8-9). But you will not reach out to grace until you first fear God's wrath, judgment, and the eternal consequences for your sins.

Tozer once said:

"No one can know the true grace of God who has not first known the fear of God."

This is true. When a man fears God's judgment and the fires of an everlasting hell burning upon his feet he will run to the cross of Christ and allow God to save him by His matchless grace (2 Cor. 8:9). A man will not get saved until he first knows what he is getting saved from. He needs to know that he is lost before he can get saved. This is not only logical, it's Biblical. Jesus Christ came to save sinners from hell-fire, brimstone, and eternal damnation (Mark 9:43-49).

The problem with our nation and lost mankind in general is this: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). Psalm 36:1 echoes the same truth: "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." This means that our society and world does not have any reverential fear for a

holy and righteous God of judgment. This character of God does not fit humanism and the popular culture which views God as only a loving God who overlooks sin and judgment. Lost mankind does not fear who God is nor do they fear the reprisal or judgment that comes upon their lives as sinners. The unsaved live their lives without possessing true concern for God's character, ways, and judgment. They live independent of God and do not possess a healthy fear toward God's holiness, righteousness, justice, and judgment. This is why there is a need for clear Gospel preaching that exposes man as a sinner, God as his Judge, and Christ as the Savior (Rom. 1:16). Preaching the Gospel evokes fear in the hearts of the unsaved so that they might respond to the true God and His Gospel message.

“The Lord Jehovah reigns alone;
Let all the nations fear;
Let sinners tremble at his throne;
And saints be humble there.”

New Testament Christianity and Fearing God

As Christians we do not need to live under any sense of condemnation (Rom. 8:33-34). We should not fear that God will let us down, or that He is not faithful, or just, or forgiving. Since believers do not have to fear God's reprisal or judgment over the matter of their sins (John 3:18, 36; 5:25 – “shall not come into condemnation”) many have concluded that fearing God has no application and relevance to the New Testament way of living. There are no less than 270 verses in the Bible that mention the fear of the Lord.

These verses underscore the necessity and benefits of cultivating a Biblical fear of God. There are those today who claim that fearing God has nothing to do with Christianity and the message of grace which is the trademark of New Testament Christianity. Such verses as Romans 8:15, 2 Timothy 1:17, and 1 John 4:18 are sometimes used to prove that fear has no proper place in the life of the New Testament believer who lives in the freedom of God's acceptance, love, and grace instead of fear and judgment. The fear of God is said to be inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity.

It's true that every believer in the New Testament can bask in the wonder of God's endless love and acceptance (Rom. 8:38-39). Nevertheless, the verses mentioned above do not override the truth about fearing God as a New Testament believer. These verses are talking about the fear that comes to the unsaved person who possesses a slave relationship with sin and the certainty of God's judicial punishment for these sins (Rom. 8:15). This fear is contrasted to the believer who possesses a father and son relationship with God and who no longer fears God's judicial condemnation upon his life. These verses also talk about possessing an improper type of fear such as the fear of witnessing for Christ and being used for God (1 Tim. 1:7-8) or the fear of failure when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ because we have not loved and served others as we should (1 John 4:17-18).

On the one hand, we are to possess a sense of awe and fear of someday standing before the Lord and being accountable to Him (2 Cor. 5:11-12). This is a healthy fear that helps keep our lives in check. However, as we love others and Christ in view of the Bema Seat only then can the plaguing or haunting fears of failure and disappointment be taken away from our lives. Love for others and for Jesus Christ, evidenced by our acts of service, casts out the fear of meeting the Lord someday and disappointing Him (1 John 2:28). This fear can be removed from our lives. The point of all these verses is this. These types of fear should not be part of a believer's life if he is serving and living by the Lord's power. He will no longer fear God's condemnation, witnessing for the Lord, and the fear of failure when standing before God.

The fact that the believer is rightly related to God through grace does not dismiss or diminish the importance of possessing a godly and wholesome fear toward God. It's true that grace is the method or way that God deals with the New Testament believer in relationship to his salvation, service and sanctification. However, when studying the New Testament Scriptures, we also see many references to the fear of God (Acts 9:31; 13:16; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:17; 3:2, 15). We certainly cannot dismiss fearing God as an outmoded Old Testament concept. There are 60 verses in the New Testament regarding the fear of the Lord. Therefore, a healthy fear of God should be part of New Testament Christianity.

A right understanding of the fear of God fits into the context of the grace way of living. How can this be? It's because grace teaches us to live a life that is holy and pleasing to God (Titus 2:11-14). However, it's equally true that holiness (Ps. 96:9) and pleasing God through obedience (Ecc. 12:13; 2 Tim. 2:4) is the underlying premise or foundation of why we are to fear God. So a healthy fear of God is also designed to promote holy and righteous living. This tells us that both grace and fear can work harmoniously together. Let me repeat something we shared earlier.

Fear reminds us of the consequences of sinning against God whereas grace provides us with the reason for not sinning against God. So a healthy fear of God does not override the message of New Testament grace. It simply works alongside of grace and becomes another motivating factor of New Testament Christianity that coincides with living by grace and loving Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:20)..

We have already emphasized that a loving relationship with God can be experienced while properly fearing God (Deuteronomy 10:12). Let's state it this way. I can love my father knowing that my father will not be happy with me if I do something wrong. The same is true with our relationship with God today. I can love God while at the same time possess a healthy fear that God may not be pleased with my life when I sin. We can also grieve God's personal presence in our lives (Eph. 4:30) while living under grace (Rom. 6:14). Therefore, I should live in such a way that I possess a wholesome fear of not pleasing God and grieving His presence in my life. I can also know that my father will discipline me if I do not conduct myself properly but this in no way threatens my personal relationship with him or the withdrawal of his love.

The same is true while living under grace (Heb. 12:4-7). Therefore, I can possess a proper fear of God's earthly chastening when I stray from Him. I can also respect and reverence my father's position and leadership over my life (Heb. 12:9) and still possess a loving and intimate relationship with him. The same is true while living under grace (James 4:8). I can possess a deep reverential fear for God while at the same time possess a loving and intimate relationship with Him (Phil. 3:10). My point is this. Grace, love, and fear have a proper

balance in the present dispensational outworking of God. They are not opposites or contradictory teachings. They work together harmoniously to provide the believer with a balanced approach to God.

Someone wrote:

“Our world is longing to see people whose God is big and holy and frightening and gentle and tender; a God whose love frightens us into His strong and powerful arms where He longs to whisper those terrifying words, 'I love you.’”

Balance is what we need today in the midst of the modern-day church which has overlooked the importance of fearing God. Although God saves us by His grace (Eph. 2:8-9) and always accepts us (Rom. 5:1-2) on the basis of grace, we must also learn the secret of possessing a wholesome fear of God in our lives that gives us an awareness of God’s holy presence, our personal accountability to Him, and God’s displeasure with our lives when we live sinful and rebellious lives. The fact that we can confidently enter God’s presence today through Christ without the fear of His reprisal (Heb. 4:16) in no way does away with the concept of possessing a healthy fear toward the presence of God.

The New Testament believer must never fear God’s judicial judgment or anger toward him since this is expressed in a law relationship that has no grace (Ex. 19:16-18). The fear of God has nothing to do with being frightened about losing our approach or acceptance before God or the withdrawal of God’s love toward us (Rom. 8:38-39). The fear of God has to do with the believer’s response toward God which can be defined as the wholesome dread of not pleasing God in our daily living and actions. It is a healthy and loving response sparked by an awareness of God’s holiness and the believer’s personal accountability toward God in his daily conduct of life.

Hebrews 12:28

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

In this verse we see how “grace” and “godly fear” are linked together in the present order. We are commissioned to serve God through grace (empowering, sustaining and strengthening grace). In other words, we are to allow God’s grace to empower our lives (2 Pet. 1:2), strengthen us (2 Cor. 12:8) and sanctify us (Rom. 6:14) so we can be changed into Christ-likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). I need the constant maintenance of God’s grace upon my life if I’m going to grow and increase in godliness (2 Pet. 3:18). On the other hand, I also need a healthy fear of God operating in my life. I need to remember who God is and react to His holiness and remember my personal responsibility and accountability toward Him. Grace and fear work together when rightly understood. They are like two sides on the same coin. They are meshed together and inseparable. Grace and fear provide us with motivation and incentive to live godly and accountable before a holy God. There is a fear that equips every Christian for life and service (Phil. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:15).

The Holy Spirit’s internal ministry in the present order is the hallmark of New Testament Christianity (Eph. 2:22; 2 Cor. 3:18). However, we must understand that part of the Spirit’s ministry is to reveal the fear of God to our lives and this is why He is called “the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isaiah 11:2). When a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit he will have an inner awareness of God’s presence, power, person, his accountability to God, and living in such a way to please God and not disappoint Him. The Holy Spirit creates a healthy fear for God in the heart as He reveals God to our lives (Romans 5:5; 15:13; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Although many relegate the “fear of God” as an OT concept we discover through a word search in the New Testament that the fear of God is a frequently used phrase and an important concept to being a godly Christian. We must refuse to think that the “fear of God” teaching is outdated. Instead we find it is connected to the well-being of our Christian lives. We find that not only is the fear of God taught in the New Testament, but it is essential to the Christian’s spiritual life (Phil. 2:12). There is no way to live a holy life without the fear of God. If we deny the fear of God as a major characteristic of a Christian’s life and experience, then we are losing site on how we are to live the Christian life. All Christians should walk “in the fear of the Lord” (Acts 9:31). This is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testaments.

Therefore, fear and grace can work together and provide the necessary means to live a holy life.

Cultivating a Fear of God

The fear of the Lord is a vital and dynamic element of Biblical living. The fear of God is the fountainhead for successful godly living (Prov. 14:27). So how does one cultivate a Biblical fear of God? There are several ways we can cultivate or develop the fear of God in our lives.

a. Through God's Word

We must read and hear God's Word if we are ever going to develop a healthy fear of God in our lives. Several verses inform us that when a person opens his heart to God's Word and is ready to do what God says, it's then he will cultivate a healthy fear of God in his life.

Deuteronomy 4:10

"Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children."

Deuteronomy 6:1-2

"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged."

We develop a healthy fear of God when we read, believe, and place ourselves under the authority of God's Word. When God speaks to us through His unchanging Word we can bring ourselves under His authority and in so doing learn to fear God. We will learn to reverence God and live out our lives with a sense of accountability before Him. We will practice His presence as we obey what He tells us to do in His Word. When we allow God's Word to touch and transform our lives we will practice fearing God. Dear friend, we are to live out our

lives by searching out and walking in the revealed truth of God's Word. God's revelation should change our lives instead of the surrounding culture. We should not adopt the cultural trends that lead us away from God. Knowing and following God's truth develops a healthy fear of God in our lives that changes our attitudes, actions, and ambitions in life.

“We, Thy people, now draw near;
Teach us to rejoice with trembling,
Speak, and let Thy servants hear-
Hear with meekness,
Hear Thy word with godly fear.”

b. Through gracious prayer

We should graciously ask God to create a healthy fear in our lives when we pray. If we want to cultivate a healthy fear of God in our lives we should seek the Lord's face and pray that we would develop a wholesome fear for the Lord. David prayed this way.

Psalm 86:11

“Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.”

What a prayer! How often have you prayed to God that He might develop in you a deeper reverential fear for His name? How often have you prayed that you might worship and live for Him with a deeper respect and godly fear governing your life? Our prayers should center upon learning to fear the Lord in a right way and a greater way in our lives. As we pray we should do so asking God to help us develop a healthy fear for Him in our times of worship and everyday living. The secret of cultivating a healthy fear of God is to stay close to Him through prayer and petition Him to create a new awareness and awesomeness of His presence in your life. God is ready and willing to reveal Himself to you in a deeper fashion and help you develop a healthy fear for Him through the avenue of prayer.

c. Through godly companions

We have already mentioned this but it is worth repeating. If we are going to develop a healthy fear for the Lord, we must make God-fearers our companions. We must seek those friends that are walking with the Lord and respectful of His holiness and ways.

Psalm 119:63 says:

“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”

Parents often wonder why their children stray in life and begin to live for themselves. Many times it has to do with the company that they keep (1 Cor. 15:33). Let's stop beating around the bush. Bad friends or companionships eventually corrupt us and destroy a healthy fear of God in our lives. Many saints have fallen into the wrong crowd only to find that their fear for the Lord has diminished and their love for the world heightened.

The company that you keep will affect you either for good or for evil. David aligned himself with those whose manner of life and conversation reflected a God-fearing attitude. Please notice how a person's fear (“them that fear thee”) of God dictates their lifestyle (“them that keep thy precepts”). Those of us who fear God will follow the truth of His Word instead of conforming to the culture or system that is against God (Rom. 12:1-2). Conformity to the world's allurements and people brings God's children into the place of spiritual defeat.

Proverbs 24:21-22

“My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?”

The Benefits of Fearing God

The key concepts that are connected with fearing God are these. Fearing God involves possessing reverent worship and submission to God. It involves accountability before God, sensitivity, a tender conscience, and awareness of the presence of God. It involves honoring God's holiness, a healthy concern of not pleasing God and meeting His standard, and the reality of God's temporal judgments for

sin. Now that we better understand what it means to fear God we can apply our learning to the many texts where the fear of God is mentioned and see how a healthy fear of God benefits our lives. Let's break down those verses that speak of fearing God and see how a healthy fear can bring spiritual benefits into our daily lives. Take a moment to reflect on those passages that speak of the desirable things and benefits that come to those who fear God.

- God cleanses our lives when we fear Him (Prov. 3:7-8; 8:13; 14:16; 16:6; Neh. 5:9; Job 1:1, 8-9; 2:3).
- God produces worship in our lives when we fear Him (Ps. 5:7; 96:9).
- God produces obedience in our lives when we fear Him (Deut. 6:12, 24; Ecc. 12:13; Gen. 22:12).
- God produces righteousness in our lives when we fear Him (Acts 10:34-35; Prov. 14:2).
- God promises to guide those who fear Him (Ps. 25:12; 128:1).
- God promotes service in our lives when we fear Him (Ps. 2:11; Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Josh. 24:14; 1 Sam. 12:24; Phil. 2:12-13).
- God changes the hearts and lives of those who fear Him (Deut. 10:12-13).
- God showers His goodness upon those who fear Him (Ps. 31:19; 128:1-4).
- God produces accountability in our lives when we fear Him (2 Cor. 5:11; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 1:17).
- God helps our marriages when we fear Him (Eph. 5:21).
- God protects those who fear Him (Ps. 33:18-19; 34:7; 145:19-20; Prov. 14:26-27).
- God delights in those who fear Him (Ps. 147:11).
- God has a special love for those who fear Him (Ps. 103:11, 17).
- God has compassion on those who fear Him (Ps. 103:13).
- God provides the needs of those who fear Him (Ps. 34:9; 111:5).
- God honors those who fear Him (Ps. 15:1-4).
- God blesses those who fear Him (Ps. 25:12-14; 115:13; 128:4; Prov. 28:14; Ex. 1:21).
- God fulfills the desires of those who fear Him (Ps. 145:19).
- God's mercy extends to those who fear Him (Ps. 103:11, 17; Luke 1:50).

- God rewards those who fear Him (Prov. 13:13).
- God gives strength to those who fear Him (Ps. 27:1).
- God gives help to those who fear Him (Ps. 115:11).
- God satisfies those who fear Him (Prov. 19:23; 145:19-20).
- God forgives our sins so we might fear Him (Ps. 130:3-4).
- God gives happiness to those who fear Him (Prov. 28:14).
- God wants us to study His Word so we might fear Him (Ps. 112:1; 119:120).
- God pities those who fear Him (Ps. 103:13).
- God promises an extension of life to those who fear Him (Pr. 10:27; 19:23; Deut. 6:12, 24).
- God brings wealth, honor and life to those who fear Him (Pr. 22:4; 128:1-4).
- God causes us to hate evil when we fear Him (Prov. 8:13; 14:16; Job 1:8; 2:3).
- God grants wisdom to those who fear Him (Prov. 9:10; 111:10; Prov. 15:33).
- God grants knowledge to those who fear Him (Pr. 1:7; 2:1-5; Isa. 33:6).
- God produces holiness in our lives when we fear Him (Prov. 14:2; 2 Cor. 7:1).
- God changes our work habits when we fear Him (Eph. 6:5).
- God brings contentment into our lives when we fear Him (Prov. 19:23).
- God produces faith in those who fear Him (Ex. 14:31; Ps. 40:3; 115:11).
- God brings hope into our lives when we fear Him (Prov. 23:17-18).
- God blesses families who fear Him (Deut. 5:29; Ps. 112:1-2; Prov. 14:26-27; Jer. 32:39-40).
- God helps us in our leadership positions when we fear Him (2 Sam. 23:3-4).
- God reveals His sovereignty to us when we fear Him (Job 23:13-15).

Daily Living and Fearing God

Every Christian must learn the secret of practicing the presence of God and naturally fearing God in their daily routine of living. When the

believer possesses a healthy fear for God he will live differently. The Bible says when a man is living in sin and does not change his lifestyle in order to please the Lord, it's because he does not possess a healthy fear of God ("Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God" - Ps. 55:19). Mark this down. When a man does not want to change the sinful patterns of his living he does not fear God in spite of what he says. Jeremiah 2:19 says, "that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts." When a person lives in rebellion to God's ways and purposes the fear of God has been diminished in his life.

a. Fearing God and holiness

The Christian who is practicing New Testament Christianity knows the importance of fearing God so that he might live a holy or sanctified life. Philippians 2:12-13 says:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

We cannot work for our salvation since God has already provided this for us as a gift through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). However, we can "work out" our salvation which is already wrought within us by living out our lives in practical holiness or sanctification. In other words, there is a daily experience of our salvation and deliverance from sin as we rely upon God's delivering power. This is what Paul is speaking about in this verse.

The salvation spoken of here is not that of the soul, but deliverance from sin and the snares which would hinder the Christian from doing the will of God. As we fear God we will live and do right by allowing His delivering power to bring us victory over every sin and blockade that Satan would put in our paths. When we work out our salvation we can be delivered from our sins, Satan, and self in our present day living. Dear friend, we must allow the power of God to work in our hearts and lives and when we do we can be delivered from all those things that are seeking to keep us from God's purpose and will for our lives. When we live without God's power in our lives we cannot work

out His salvation or deliverance in our lives on a daily basis. Only as we fear God in a respectful and accountable way can we learn to rely upon His power.

b. Fearing God and the home

The modern American home today is no longer a God-fearing home. This is why our homes are flooded with rock music, drugs, sex, trash TV and Internet, juvenile delinquents, rebellious teenagers, marriage problems, and divorce. A healthy fear of God will do wonders for the home life. The Bible assures us that instilling a proper fear of God in our children's hearts and daily living in the presence of God by both mother and father leads to a healthy home life.

1. The children

Psalm 34:11

“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”

All God's children must learn to fear the Lord as we know. But I would like to apply this to our young generation today within the church. Children must know and understand that they offend a holy God and that they are accountable before God for their actions. We have failed to teach our children and the church today that God hates sin, that God is not pleased with us when we sin, and that a holy God holds us accountable before Him when we sin. We sometimes wonder why we cannot get anywhere with our children. We try self-esteem, self-concept, and “Just say no” programs but through it all we fail to instill within their hearts the fear of the Lord. The holy fear of the Lord will help bring our children to the place where they will feel accountable before God and seek to live holy and right before Him.

One important lesson parents need to teach their children is about the fear of God. If you teach your child to fear God the child will learn how to survive in a sinful world. As a mom and dad you don't thrust young children into the world so they can survive. This theory came from the devil's bible! You don't throw a young child out into the street to see how they do with traffic. No, you teach them to fear or respect

traffic so they learn the importance of staying away from the danger. You teach them how to cross the street in safety.

When a mother teaches her young children the fear of the Lord she is teaching them that there are some things in life that God is not pleased with. When a mother teaches her children the fear of the Lord her children will possess a wholesome dread of not pleasing the Lord and honoring His holiness. She will teach them that God's heart is broken when they sin, His holiness offended, and that sin has consequences. The point is this. If you want to raise wise children, then teach them to fear God. If you allow your children to listen to rock music, watch movies, read books, and magazines, and hang out with friends that promote profanity, negative attitudes, illicit sex, rebellion, and violence, then you should not be surprised when your children adopt the world's philosophies. Parents need to fear the Lord and pass this same fear down to their children and the next generation.

Deuteronomy 5:29

“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”

Deuteronomy 6:1-2

“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.”

Deuteronomy 31:12-13

“Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law. And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.”

Our children must learn to reverence God for His holiness and understand that a holy God does not put up with sin and uncleanness. When they are aware of God's holiness and ever-present watching eye they will develop a reverent fear for God in their lives. They will develop a deep respect for God and His holiness and possess an alarm system in their hearts when they sin against His holy character.

The Bible says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10). All true wisdom in life flows out of our reverent fear for God and His holiness. Success in parenting literally begins by instilling within our children the fear of God. This fear once again speaks of a reverence for God's holiness, which leads to forsaking sin. It speaks about an awareness of God's holy presence, the healthy fear of God's displeasure with sin, a tender conscience and sensitivity to sin, and the reality that sin can bring God's reprisal upon our lives. A wholesome fear of God will drive a child to understand that he must confess his sins to God. Children should learn to fear God when they violate His standards. Our children must learn that when they do wrong, they hurt a holy God. They need to know that their sin is an offense against God's holiness.

Not long ago a mother came to me and said that her little son was crying and bothered by something that he had done wrong. He had been told not to spit in the yard and he was out there doing it anyway like most kids will do. But he knew that he had broken the rule and after a bit the fear of God got a hold of his little heart. He knew he had broken the law of his father and mother and that this was wrong in God's sight. Therefore, he had a holy fear before God that he had done wrong. This is a minor thing to say the least but it proves the point that the fear of God works on the hearts of our children.

2. The wife

Proverbs 31:30

"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised."

A woman's true beauty is seen in that she "feareth the LORD" which means that she has deep reverence and respect for God, so much

so, that she possesses a wholesome dread of not pleasing God with her life. In other words, the virtuous woman lives to please God and this is her driving force. She wants to live in such a way that her life brings pleasure to God and that she has His favor. The fear of God means that she lives to honor God and with this mindset she will not want to do anything that will bring displeasure to Him and offend His holiness. Sometimes a mother tries to live right in order to set a good example for the children. Now mom, this attitude may be noble but it is not good enough in and of itself. You must choose to live right as a Christian mother because God is watching you and when you sin you break the heart of God and offend Him. You must live right and do right because you love Him more than your old life of sin and because you know that when you sin you are accountable to God.

3. The man

Job 1:1-2

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.”

Job was a man who was “perfect” which in the Hebrew means sound, wholesome, ethically pure, morally innocent, and full of integrity. He was also “upright” which means that Job’s life was spiritually proper and pleasing to God. How can any man live in such a way as this during the 21st century? The answer is that Job “feared God” more than he feared man or anything else in the world. The fear of God is what made Job blameless and upright in his overall manner of living. So often today we get things turned around in our Christian walk. We think that simply what we do is what makes us blameless and upright. But God makes it clear here that it was Job's relationship with God that made the difference in his life. Job’s fear of God or his loving respect, reverence, and accountability before a holy God is what allowed him to shun evil. A healthy fear of God, who He is and how He looks at sin, caused him to live blameless and upright. It was because of His relationship with God that God chose to bless him.

“Blest the man who fears Jehovah,
Walking ever in his ways;
Thou shalt eat of thy hands’ labor,
And be happy all thy days.”

Christian men of this age need to be reminded to be the leaders of their families but before they can be true leaders of their families they must fear God. Our society is so "do" oriented. Most of us, men and women alike, are so busy we don't take the time to hear from God anymore. Oh, our intentions are good. We have a true desire to be like Job, but are going about it the wrong way, allowing ourselves to be influenced by the world instead of truly fearing God and seeking the Lord. We all need to be reminded at times that it is our relationship with God that brings His blessing, not what we might try to do for Him. The cultivation of that fearing relationship with God will make us people who are blameless and upright and who “eschew” or shun evil. It is that relationship with God, its richness and love that will filter through and change our lives and the lives of our family.

We must stop striving and put more time in our life for our relationship with God. Spend time every day, not just Sunday and Wednesday, with the One who made us to fellowship with Him for eternity. I know it's easy to say and harder to do, but unless all of us make time with God a priority we will continue to be ineffective and unproductive in our Christian living. It is our relationship with Him, a relationship of loving reverence and accountability to the God who loves us, that will be the fuel that ignites the rest of our life and makes our life pleasing to the Lord and what He wants it to be. By the way, God wants our lives as men to be light and life in a dark and dying world!

Conclusion

As we close this study we find that the fear of God is taught in both Old and New Testaments and that it is essential to the Christian's spiritual life. There is no way to live a holy life without the fear of God. If we deny the fear of God as a major characteristic of a Christian's life, then we are missing out on an important, spiritual ingredient for living the Christian life. A healthy fear of God will help us to avoid those spiritual pitfalls and plaguing sins in life that would displease God. God is a loving God but He is also a fearful God. He must be

feared with reverence and accountability because of His matchless holiness. A Biblical fear of God is then a loving response to God that demonstrates reverence, respect, and accountability before a holy God who loves us. It involves an awareness of God's presence, a sensitivity to sin, a tender conscience, and healthy alarm system in our lives that goes off whenever we are about to do something that is going to hurt God and bring His displeasure.

We have a direct command from God to fear Him in both Old and New Testaments (Lev. 19:14; 25:17, 36, 43; Ecc. 12:13; 1 Pet. 2:17). When we understand our loving and reverent response to a God who is infinitely holy in His being and practice, when we sense our accountability to a God who is always watching us, when we understand how much our sin hurts God, then we will repent of our sins, come to our spiritual senses, and start living for God.

“Almighty God! our hearts incline
Thy heavenly voice to hear;
Let all our future days be Thine,
Devoted to Thy fear.”