

The Fear of God / part A

“God is love” and yet we are to “fear God.” Can love and fear go together? We might love the ocean but we better fear it also with its sea creatures, currents, and waves if we want to truly enjoy it. Love puts you in the ocean but fear keeps you safe.

The subject of fearing God to many is passé and belongs back in the Old Testament. Some define fear only as a reverential respect of God – like one might respect an older person with gray hair and give them honor in seating. But does biblical fear also include how you react when you see a police car on the highway?

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,” Pro. 1:7. The Lord Jesus Christ preached the fear of God, Matt. 10:28. The apostles preached fear to the churches for fear and love go together. A child fears and loves his parents at the same time. A child runs to his parent’s arms in affection and yet when doing something bad might run away or cover their eyes. Love brings him close. Fear makes him aware of his wrong.

Fear can be a very positive thing in a world of danger. The fear of pain keeps a child from touching a hot stove and thus protects him. Healthy fear keeps things balanced like how one walks on a tightrope. And, *“by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil,”* Pro. 16:6.

We see love, fun, clapping, jokes, videos, drama, exciting “worship teams” and inspiring relationship messages in many churches but where has the fear gone? *“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence,”* Psa. 89:7. A healthy fear keeps sin and man’s ways out of the church. Fear breeds holiness, 2Cor. 7:1. Also in the gospel have we so sacrificed the fear of God on the altar of love that we have air-conditioned hell?

New Testament Definition of Fear

‘Phobeo’ is used 90 times and means to be afraid because of some harm – as the officers would not use violence with the apostles for they *“feared”* being stoned by the people, Acts 5:26. ‘Phobos’ (similar to our English word “phobia) is used 44 times and means that which strikes dread or terror - like when the guards at the tomb saw the angel, shining as lightning, roll back the grave stone, they shook in *“fear”* and became as dead, Matt. 28:4. ‘Eulabeia’ is used only 2 times and basically means a reverent respect with caution – like believers are to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly *“fear,”* Heb. 12:28.

Things Believers are NOT to Fear

1. **Man** – Fearing man compromises God’s truth and *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear.”* Indeed, *“the fear of man bringeth a snare”*, (Pro. 29:25, Matt. 10:28 / John. 7:13 / 2Tim. 1:7 / Heb. 13:6).

2. **Judgment** – Once saved the believer never has to fear God’s eternal tormenting judgment for his sins - for perfect love (Christ’s death) casts out fear, 1John 4:17-18.

“Things” We ARE to Fear Because of Earthly Consequences

1. **God** – The right balance toward man and God is to, *“Love the brotherhood. Fear God”*. We are to be *“perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”* (2Cor. 7:1 / 1Pet. 1:17, 2:17 / Eph. 5:21 // Rev.14:7).

14 Examples of Fear (phobos and phobeo) in Action in the NT

1. **Healed Woman** – She had touched the hem of Christ’s garment and the Lord looked at her - *“the woman fearing and trembling fell down...and told Him [Jesus] all the truth,”* Mark 5:33.
2. **New Converts** – When 3000 Jews, led by the apostles, turned from their perverse nation to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ, *“fear came upon every soul,”* Acts 2:43.
3. **Church** – When they heard of the deaths of sinning Ananias and Sapphira, it went from “great grace” upon them, Acts 4:33, to *“great fear came upon all the church,”* Acts 5:11.
4. **Churches** – As the persecutor Saul was converted and became the persecuted for the Lord Jesus, the churches were comforted and were *“walking in the fear of the Lord,”* Acts 9:31.
5. **Preaching the Gospel** – To Cornelius, Acts 10, and now to a synagogue, the gospel focused on, *“whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent,”* Acts 13:26.
6. **Citizens & Believers** – When they saw demons in action, many burnt their magic occult books, as *“fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified,”* Acts 19:17.
7. **Corinthian Assembly** – When the church in godly sorrow repented for not correcting sin among them, Paul praised them now for having, *“fear...desire... zeal,”* 2Cor. 7:11.
8. **Church** – After Paul’s rebuke, he rejoiced, for by receiving his delegate Titus proved their obedient fear of the Word; *“with fear and trembling ye received him,”* 2Cor. 7:15 / Ezra 9:4.
9. **Christian** – Not just in front of the preacher but fearfully working out practically what God is doing in you; *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,”* Philp. 2:12.
10. **Workplace** – Servants (employees) are to, *“obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God,”* Col. 3:21.
11. **Public Assembly** – The assembly is to deal with the sinning before all to help impart a restraining fear; *“them that sin rebuke before all, that others may also fear,”* 1Tim. 5:20 / 1Cor. 5:4.
12. **Wives** – Her demeanor to her husband, even when he disobeys, is to be a respectful fear, for it might win him as, *“they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear,”* 1Pet. 3:2.
13. **Witnessing Believer** – Even when suffering unjustly, our answers need to imitate Christ; *“give an answer to every man that asketh you...with meekness and fear,”* 1Pet. 3:15, 2:23.
14. **Reigning Saints** – The fear of God reveals that His judgment is just and so the ruling believers praise Him. *“Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him,”* Rev. 19:5.

Is grace now greater than the glory of God? Love without fear and you have liberalism – no control. Fear without love and you have legalism – no care. But fear and love together and you have Christ: *“I love the Father”* and *“in that He feared,”* John 14:31, Heb. 5:7.

The Fear of God / part B

Why should we fear the Lord Jesus since He is our Savior who died for our sins and totally forgives and justifies the repentant believer? Isn't Jesus meek and lowly? Doesn't Jesus love the sinner? In death He is the Savior but in resurrection He is the great High Priest, the Head of all things to the church, the coming King of kings, and the confirmed Judge of all. Jesus is now the Lord Jesus Christ – exalted, glorified and crowned!

When we understand who He is in resurrection glory it can be a game changer in our attitude. Following are 4 areas that look at the Lord, not as our Savior, but as the Judge.

The Lord Jesus is Now Confirmed as Judge

The Father has entrusted all judgment to His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, *“the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”* *Christ has the keys of hell.* John, who leaned on Jesus, now falls at His feet as dead when he sees the glorified Lord shining as the sun brandishing a sharp sword with eyes of fire. For one to say I believe in God but not trust or love His choice of the Lord Jesus is to be on the outs with the Supreme judge. (See John 5:22, Rev.1:13-18).

The Gospel of Christ starts with Judgment

The gospel of Christ as revealed in Romans does not start with love but with wrath (righteous anger) and judgment, *“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven” / “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” / “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”* Love does not come till chapter 5. For first, there is something to be saved from. Christ didn't die for us because we are nice or loveable but because we are ungodly sinners and enemies of God under His judgment. Now this is grace and love. (See Romans 1:18, 2:5,16, 5:6-10). Yes for the unsaved, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,”* Heb. 10:31.

The Judgment of the Lord Jesus on the Unsaved

When the judgment of God falls on this world it is *“the wrath of the Lamb”* that men are in terror of and trying to hide from. Who ever ran from a lamb? But the meek and lowly Savior is now the awesome Judge. The Lord Jesus comes back in vengeance and flaming fire in that day. Yes, God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world by that Man He appointed and raised from the dead. (See Rev. 6:12-17, 2Thess. 1:7-9, Acts 17:30, 31).

The Judgment of the Lord Jesus and the Saved

Even the saved will have to give an account of their works and service to the Lord. And this is called, *“the judgment seat of Christ.”* Here it is not a judgment of punishment for sins (for that was done on the cross) but an evaluation of our life for Him to see if we will receive any extra rewards. There is justice after all. And it is His fire (not results, consensus or feelings) through which our works must survive. (See 2Cor. 5:10, 1Cor. 3:10-15).

Yes *“our God is a consuming fire”*, so *“let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,”* Heb. 12:28-29. May we have the balance taught in Deut. 10:12: *“... 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... .”* Jesus is risen from the dead and He is Lord!