

Fear the Lord and Live  
Dan Huff

There are many things we can fear. But one thing is necessary: to “*fear God and keep His commandments. For this is man’s all.*” This was the conclusion of Solomon, who was given great wisdom by God. He went on to say why: for we must give account to Him for our lives, and how we choose to live (**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**). The word “fear” in the Bible can mean several things. However, the context will often help us understand how it is used.

*Now all the people witnessed the thunderings the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin”* (**Exodus 20:18-20**).

It was important for the children of Israel to witness the power, beauty, and majesty of God Almighty. The children of Israel were trembling at what they saw and experienced. God through Moses told them not to fear. The first fear is to be afraid, frightened, to dread, or to be intimidated. This is not what God desires for those who serve Him. Rather, God desires for His people to have a deep reverence, piety, and awe for His power and authority. A proper fear will lead souls to faith, love and obedience. The fear of God is so that we may not sin, so that we may live.

In **Exodus 32**, we see one example of why it is important to fear God. Some days after the events in **Exodus 20**, we see that the people didn’t fear God. They were dancing around the idol, the golden calf they had molded with their own power and wisdom, even giving it credit for bringing them out of Egypt! They had left their Deliverer and made a perversion of what He had provided.

The fear of God restrains us from doing stupid things by following our human nature. When there is no fear of God, when restraint is cast off, mankind tends to degenerate swiftly down a slope into chaos and sin, where selfishness rules. Paul quotes a list of sins in **Romans 3:10-18** from which he draws the conclusion, “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*”

None of us would think of sticking our finger in a light socket. Why? We have a healthy dose of fear; we respect what can happen. We have a knowledge and understanding of the power of 120 volts of electricity flowing through that socket. We don’t want to get shocked or burned. Therefore, fear is good and a benefit to us. How much more should we have a healthy fear, respect, and reverence for God, who is far superior to, and mightier than, man-made electricity, lest we get eternally burnt?

I like to think of the fear of God as being like a magnet; on one side it repels us from doing things that will harm us and our relationship with God. A healthy fear of God includes the fear of disobedience and the consequences following (**2 Corinthians 5:10-11**). On the other side there is a drawing effect that draws us nearer to God through obedient faith and strengthens our relationship with Him. “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded*” (**James 4:8**). Again, in this verse we see the need to remove ourselves from sin and its corrupting influence, purify our hearts, and by faith draw near to God. As we do so, He will draw near to us.

In the Scriptures the fear of God is used in a positive manner. There are a plethora of examples wherein fearing God is beneficial. Here is a smattering: “*The fear of the Lord is clean*” (**Psalms 19:9**). It is wholesome and for our good! “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*” (**Proverbs 1:7**). “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments*” (**Psalms 111:10**). Fear of the Lord can bring about obedience. Consider **Hebrews 11:7**: Noah, because of his faith, “*moved with godly fear, [and] prepared an ark for the saving of his household.*” God has mercy on those who fear Him (**Luke 1:50**). “*The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he who has it will be satisfied*” (**Proverbs 19:23**).

The more we fear God and keep His commandments, the more it will have an impact on our relationships with others. We will have more concern and care for our fellow man (“*Love our neighbor as our self.*”). We will make efforts to seek our neighbors' good, attempting to understand our neighbors, and putting ourselves in their shoes. We will have civil conversations, even over things that we disagree on (**Matthew 5:43-48; 22:36-40**).

The more we fear Him, the more we learn to trust Him, His word, and His plan (**Proverbs 3:5-6**). We develop an understanding that our heavenly Father is interested in our eternal welfare and life. The relationship grows and evolves from one of fear of punishment to one of love and desire to serve and

please the Lord, motivated by our love for Him (**1 John 4:19**). As His children we don't want to offend or disappoint Him.

God is not in heaven watching us, just waiting for us to sin or falter, so He can rain down his fury upon us. This is not how our Creator works. We should never lose sight that we are valuable in God's eyes. Jesus said, *"Do not fear therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows."* But He tempered that with, *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (**Matthew 10:31, 28**). God's purpose is He wants us to choose Him and live! Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"* (**John 10:10**).

If we love the Lord, we will keep His commandments (**John 14:15**). If we keep His commandments, which are not burdensome but for our good and our living (**1 John 5:3; 2 Peter 1:3-4**), then we do not have a reason to be terrified of God, and of eternal punishment in the Day of Judgment (**1 John 4:17-18**).

*"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (**2 Corinthians 7:1**).