

# The Fear of God

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Nothing brings about greater satisfaction in life than being totally devoted to God. Nothing is as enriching, as a true and vital relationship with our Heavenly Father. For us as Christians, being totally devoted to God is the essence of life. When we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice we experience fullness of life.

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1-2; all Scripture citations are from the NKJV).*

This is what God desires: our full devotion to Him. In the process we are able to experience the good will of God. We can then be transformed, enabled to experience real life.

But we will never make a full offering of ourselves to God unless we learn to fear Him. We may make attempts to sacrifice parts of our lives, we may make attempts to have our mind renewed in order to escape a problem, but without a deep and profound reverence for God, there will be no full sacrifice.

The fear of God begins with a feeling of dread or terror over judgment for sin (e.g. Ex. 20:18-20). Sin must be dealt with. If society has the right to punish criminals, if countries have the right to execute traitors, then surely God has the right to let men suffer the consequences of their rebelliousness.

But the fear of God must not end there. True godly fear should soon turn into a deep and profound reverence and respect and awe of God because of what He has done with the problem of sin. God has righteously and mercifully dealt with sin.

*If you LORD should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is*

*forgiveness with You, That you may be feared (Psalm 130:3-4).*

God has dealt with the problem of sin, not by letting all of us suffer its consequences, but by delivering us from our unrighteousness.

*For He [God] made him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21).*

*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.*

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*

*For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

*And not only that, but we also rejoice in god through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (Rom. 5:6-11).*

Mercifully and with complete righteousness, God placed the sins of the whole world on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ lived in perfect obedience to God, then died for our sins to bring honor to God and to save our lives. In Jesus Christ we are saved wrath and saved, or made whole, in Christ. In what God has accomplished through our Lord Jesus Christ we can again reign in life.

*For if by the one man's [Adam's] offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17).*

We can again experience life as it was meant to be lived; we can again live life with God.

Mankind was originally created to bear the image of God, to be the exact representation of His

glorious life. Mankind, originally, (in Adam and Eve) was God's greatest masterpiece. The greatest thing God could do to show His "God-head" was to create a race of "god-like" creatures. This is what He did in Adam and Eve. But man rebelled.

God was extremely clear as to what the consequences were to be if man disobeyed - death. But Adam went for the forbidden fruit. God would have been legally right to let man suffer the penalty for sin. But His mercy compelled Him to redeem His creation. So justice and mercy collided at the cross of Christ. As 2 Corinthians declares, Christ became sin for us, so we could become the righteousness of God and again bear His awesome image in all of its fullness.

Who would not fear such a God? Who would not stand in awe of such righteousness, such compassion, and love? Who would not fear to once again bring honor and shame to His name? Only a fool!

Coming now to the New Testament, we see that the discovery of the new life we Christians have in Christ leads to recovery of the fear of God.

*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

*And they continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

*Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles (Acts 2:41-43).*

On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of holy spirit was poured out upon those who believed in Christ. The apostles manifested the spirit of God, speaking in tongues the wonderful works of God. People gathered together to see what was going on and Peter preached to them of the deliverance God was offering them in Christ. Those who accepted His word devoted themselves to learning and experiencing their new life. As they did, fear came upon every soul and miracles happened.

When believers had their eyes opened to see what they had been saved from and the glorious life to which they were called, they stood in fear, or awe of God. They realized the foolishness and stupidity

of trying to live life outside God's will. And they feared God who had in His mercy regained life for them through Christ. The result of their fear is summarized in the remaining verses of Acts 2.

*Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.*

*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.*

*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:43-47).*

Soon though, persecution hit the church. The thief, Satan, attempted to rob believers of their new relationship with God. The leaders of the church were hounded and threatened for teaching in the name of Jesus Christ. Within the church there were some who lied about their love for God, and a man by the name of Saul sought to capture and kill or imprison the believers. But the power of God was manifested and believers stood their ground and even Saul was converted, having been witnessed to by the Lord Jesus Christ himself! The result of all of this is summarized in Acts chapter 9.

*Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit they were multiplied (Acts 9:31).*

Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the holy spirit the church flourished! To walk in the fear of the Lord is to think and act only from the principle of being devoted to God. It is to live by God's will alone. The comfort of the holy spirit is associated with walking in the fear of the Lord. We so often strive after the comfort of the holy spirit, the fruit that it can bring to our life. But without respect for God, without doing His will (i.e., walking in the fear of the Lord) there is no comfort.

We have been called to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to make known the

glory of our Father God. How are we doing? Are we experiencing the comfort of the holy spirit? Is the church multiplying?

*Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ... (II Cor. 5:9-11a).*

All of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. All of us! Have we been well pleasing to him? Have we brought honor to his name and to the name of our God? Have we manifested the life that has been so graciously given to us? Do we want to forfeit joy in the presence of the Lord? Knowing, therefore, the terror (or fear) of the Lord we should persuade and encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ to do the will of God.

We have been redeemed, saved from the wrath of God that will come upon the ungodly. The Bible tells us that we were once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. Why should we who are redeemed live like we are still bound by sin?

*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

*And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?*

*And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them, I will be their God, And they shall be my people."*

*Therefore, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."*

*"I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD almighty."*

*Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of*

*the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).*

The Scriptures are so clear. Since we are now the temple of the living God, since we have His life in us, His holiness, let us bring this holiness, this life to perfection. Let us manifest and experience all that God has made us in Christ, in the fear of God. Let us live in His will, seeing the wonderful transformation of our lives, and let us do it with the deep reverence and respect and awe of God.

The fear of God is the first step in cultivating a life of devotion to God. As I Timothy 4:8 told us, godliness or total devotion to God, is profitable for the life we live now and for the one to come. Since we are called to experience the holy life, real life, let us press on to perfection. Let us press on towards a full relationship with God and experience a full joy.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

*to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you ... (I Peter 1:3-4).*

*Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

*As obedient children, not conforming to yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;*

*But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,*

*Because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*

*And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear [my emphasis];*

*Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,*

*But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb with blemish and without spot (I Peter 1:13-19).*

We were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Do we wish to bring shame and dishonor to his sacrifice? In our day and time, if the Christian church is ever to present the truth of God's Word in the right manner, if we are ever to experience the joys of godliness, we must begin to cultivate a profound fear and reverence for God and our Lord Jesus Christ. We must begin to view God and our Lord in the infinite majesty that belongs to them alone. God is the Creator and Supreme ruler of the universe. Jesus Christ is our Lord!

Words often fail to fully describe the glory of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. What we can now see and understand is only a small reflection of the full glory. But one day we will see it face to face! Then we will fear in the fullest sense of the word. Ultimate joy in life comes from full devotion to God.

*I have set the LORD always before me; Because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.*

*Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.*

*For you will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

*You will show me the path of life; In your presence is fullness of joy; At your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:8-11).*

To "set the Lord always before" us is total devotion. It begins with the fear of God, but it quickly expands as we come to understand the precious love of God. This we shall see in the next chapter.

Jesus Christ said in John 10:10 that the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. Satan's great purpose for the Christian is to rob us of the joy of having a real and vital relationship with God. The fear of God keeps us guarded against him.

So many times in life it may seem like the ungodly are ones who prosper and get the most out of life. But there is more to life than the 70 or 80 years we have on this earth in its present form.

*Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all day;*

*For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off (Proverbs 23:17-18).*

As Christians our hope is to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to become heirs of God and to enjoy fellowship with Him forever. The fear of God shows us that there is someone to be reckoned with, someone upon whom we can rely, in whom we can rejoice. If we are unhappy it is because we have not found our joy in the Lord God Almighty, the only source of total satisfaction.

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