

Attitude Towards God Part 3 — Do You Fear Him?

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Acts 9:31

The right attitudes are absolutely necessary.

Psalms 100:2-4, “*Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*”

The right attitudes are necessary for unity in a local congregation. All the talent in the world cannot make up for wrong attitudes that we may have. Prov. 23:7, “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: ...*”

With the right attitudes, our efforts in service to the Lord are enhanced and live up to their full potential.

Attitude defined: A state of mind or a feeling, disposition.

In other words, One’s perception of something.

Religiously we can have an attitude that brings blessings from God, or one that brings disfavor from Him.

Let’s notice some of the attitudes we need to have toward God.

We must be sure to maintain the proper attitudes in this life if we expect to receive His blessings. One of the things in this life is a close fellowship with God.

One of the things in this life we must maintain is a proper attitude of fearing God.

In writing about the early church, Luke recorded:

Acts 9:31, “*Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*”

Note that they were “*walking in the fear of the Lord*”!

In the assembly of the early church they sang songs of praise yet were humble before the Lord. They found no contradiction between love and fear.

In writing to the church at Philippi, Paul told them: Phil. 2:12, “*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.*”

The concept of “*fear and trembling*” in connection with God is not a popular concept today. People prefer to hear about God’s love, longsuffering, and mercy. Sometimes, when we point out God’s righteous indignation, holiness, and justice, people reply “My God is not like that!”

The emphasis on God’s love and mercy today is probably a reaction to the “hell, fire, and brimstone” preaching of another generation. But could it be that we have gone to other extreme? Where there is no concept of “*fear and trembling*” as it relates to the Christian?

Could this be why many Christians are apathetic in their service? Could it be we have forgotten in whom we should fear if we are negligent in our service? Matt. 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.*”

Those who preach a social gospel and not the word of God do not have a fear of the Lord. Paul said, “*Woe if I preach not the gospel.*”

In this lesson, I hope to accomplish three things about our attitude of fearing the Lord:

- Define the “*fear of the Lord*”.
- Point out why the “*fear of the Lord*” is important to the Christian.
- Suggest how we can develop a healthy “*fear of the Lord*” without going to one extreme or the other.

We begin by...

Defining the “*fear of the Lord*”.

The word “*fear*” in the Hebrew is “YIR’AH” and is used in the Old Testament to describe: Fear, terror, awesome or terrifying thing (object causing fear), fear (of God), respect, reverence, piety.

The Greek word for “fear” is “PHOBOS” {fob’-os} or “PHOBEO” {fob-eh’-o}, and it is used to describe: Fear, dread, terror, flee from harm, seized with alarm.

In connection with the “fear of the Lord”, today it is often defined as “reverence” or “awe”.

Which is fine as far as it goes. But this definition truly does not go far enough. For though the terms “reverence” and “awe” imply a place for “*trembling*”, do most people make the connection?

The “*fear of the Lord*” should include a place for “*trembling*”! Even as Paul indicated in Phil. 2:12, by combining “*fear and trembling*”. Phil. 2:12, “*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.*”

The Greek word for “*trembling*” is “TROMOS” and means “a trembling or quaking with fear”. Just as one would likely tremble in the presence of one who could take our life, so Jesus taught us to fear the Lord. Matt. 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.*”

A proper “*fear of the Lord*” does include “reverence and awe”; being afraid to offend God in any way.

But also, a trembling and quaking if one knows they have offended God and have not obtained forgiveness!

- Heb. 10:26-27, “*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*”
- Heb. 10:30-31, “*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 is the definition of that kind of fear: 5398 phoberos {fob-er-os} (Grk.) (1) inspiring fear, terrible fear, formidable fear (2) affected with fear (KJV: fearful, terrible).

The following is an example: Heb. 12:28-29, “*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.*”

Godly fear is eulabeia {yoo-lab’-i-ah} reverence, veneration, reverence toward God, godly fear, piety (3) fear anxiety, dread (KJV: godly fear, fear).

The value of such an attitude is seen as we continue on and now notice...

The importance of the “*fear of the Lord*”.

From the book of Proverbs, we learn...

- Prov. 1:7, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
- Prov. 8:13, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”
- Prov. 10:27, “The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.”
- Prov. 16:6, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.”
- Prov. 19:23, “The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.”
- Prov. 22:4, “By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.”

From these verses we learn that without the “*fear of the Lord*”...

- We close ourselves to the treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge!
- We will flirt with evil and be corrupted by it.
- Our lives are likely to be shortened by our refusal to heed God’s word (e.g., suffering sexually transmitted diseases because we did not heed His Word on sexual relationships).
- We will not come to know the love of God that gives us assurance and confidence of our salvation.
- When fallen into sin, we will not be motivated to repent and turn to God!
- We will not be motivated to truly “*work out our own salvation*”!

Without the “*fear of the Lord*”, we simply cannot please God. Isa. 66:1-2, “*Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*”

Only the person who “*trembles at His word*” has God’s promise to receive His tender mercy!

Psalms 103:17-18, “*But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*”

But how does one develop the proper “*fear of the Lord*” without going to the extreme of earlier generations?

Developing the “*fear of the Lord*”.

The “*fear of the Lord*” comes through the word of God, just as faith does! Rom. 10:17, “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”

The same can be said for the “*fear of the Lord*”! Notice Deut. 31:10-13, “*And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 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.*”

As one reads the Word of God, they should gain a healthy degree of the “*fear of the Lord*”.

Consider the words of Paul in Rom. 2:4-11, “*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.*”

Those who obey not the word of the Lord have reason to fear.

Or how about the words of Peter in 2 Pet. 3:7-14, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

Proper fear causes us to study the scriptures so that we may be assured that our life is pleasing to Him.

The word of God, properly used, will maintain a proper balance.

It is important to emphasize, however, that to avoid extremes, we must read **all** of God's Word.

Some read only those portions that reveal God's love and mercy, and have no "*fear of the Lord*".

Others emphasize the "fire, hell and brimstone" passages, and know nothing of God's lovingkindness.

The one develops an attitude of permissiveness that belittles God's holiness and justice. The other develops a paranoid terror that forgets God's grace and compassion.

Even in the passages noted above, the context of each speaks much of God's grace and forgiveness for those who will repent!

So we must be careful how we use the Word of God, but use it we must!

Conclusion.

Psalms 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.*”

Why do we need to “*fear the Lord*”? So we will be sure to “*work out our salvation with fear and trembling*”! The warning is necessary, for as it is written in Hebrews: Heb. 4:1-2, “*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*”

And again, Heb. 4:11, “*Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*”

Some quote 1 John 4:7-18 to express that they choose to love God rather than fear Him, “*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*”

When people say they choose to love God instead of fearing Him fail to understand this passage.

If we truly love Him, we will want to study everything about Him and His word, and we will want to do everything in our power to please Him. That is how we show Him that we love Him. If we study His word and live by it to the best of our ability, our fear of any consequences will be erased.

However, if we fail to have the proper respect for Him and His word, we can expect to receive the consequences of failing to heed Him. For this we should greatly fear and tremble. We should have the proper amount

of fear in our lives to constantly study His word to make sure we won't be found wanting when we stand before Him at the Judgment Day.

With the proper "*fear of the Lord*", we will "*work out our salvation*", we will labour...to enter into that [heavenly] rest!

2 Cor. 7:1, "*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.*"

Are you "*perfecting holiness in the fear of God*"?

