

Doctrine of Fear of God

Motivations for Fearing God

1. The exhortation to learn to fear God comes from the greatest of saints. David said, "*O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him*" (Psalm 34:9).
2. It is said of Obadiah that he "*feared the Lord greatly*" (1 Kings 18:3).
3. Every true saint does fear the Lord, but not every saint fears the Lord in the same degree.
4. Those who fear God the most are properly motivated to do so. The motives that cause the Christian to fear the Lord are many.
 - A desire for heaven. Is not the reason why you are saved, and have a confidence of going to heaven, is because of sovereign grace? God has declared, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*" (Romans 9:15). What would be your fate if God had not decided to show special love to you? Does that not make your heart tremble?
 - The privileges of grace. The many privileges that are bestowed upon those who know the fear of God should motivate the heart to grow in the grace of fear. *Time Magazine* once asked Billy Graham why he was so successful. "*I will have to ask the Lord that when I get to heaven,*" he responded. Part of the answer is this: the man fears God, as did John Calvin, Martin Luther, and countless others.
 - A desire to escape trouble. The person that grows in the grace of fear will escape many difficulties that come upon other people. Joseph suffered fewer hardships in prison than others with him because he feared God, and did what was right. With eternity in view, it can be said that part of the New Covenant is that God's people will be kept from final apostasy. Jeremiah 32:40: "*I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.*"
 - The longing to grow in grace. To grow in the grace of fear is the way to be kept in a conscientious performance of Christian duties. Sometimes a watch is perfect in structure, but does not keep time well because the main spring is damaged. Sometimes a Christian does not act properly. The proper motive of fearing God has been lost. Fear of God will repair the mainspring.
 - A desire to be wise. Growing in the grace of fear is the spiritual way to be wise. Proverbs 14:16 says that, "*A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil.*" Biblical wisdom is knowing how to act in a given situation. Is it not wise to flee from attitudes and actions that lead to death and destruction? It will be possible to do that when God is feared.
 - A desire to honor God. The desire to honor the Lord is also a proper motive to grow in the grace of fear. Children who fear their parents honor them. So people who fear the Sovereign of the universe honor Him.

- A desire to bring honor to self. To fear God is to bring honor to oneself. Hosea 13:1 declares that, *“When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel.”* Proverbs 31:30 teaches that, *“A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.”* The Lord promises in 1 Samuel 2:30, *“Them that honor me, I will honor.”* To advance in the grace of fear, is to be entrusted with more responsibilities. Joseph was made a master in Egypt. Obadiah became a steward of Ahab's house. Daniel, Mordecai, and the three children of Israel were made rulers over the province of Babylon. God looks to discover, not who has natural ability, but who fears Him.
- In order to perfect faith. Growing in the grace of fear allows for a perfecting of the faith. 2 Corinthians 7:1 commands, *“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”* What is perfecting holiness if it is not growing in faith, hope, love, and the fear of God? As our faith and love should be greater with the passing of time, so should our fear of God.
- To have a holy boldness. Growing in the grace of fear provides great boldness with God and man. Job feared God, and boldly spoke to Him. He wanted to find the Lord so that he could argue his case as a man to a man. Nehemiah prayed, *“O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name”* (1:11).
- To save others. Learning to fear the Lord stimulates the desire to have spiritual labors blessed to the saving of the souls of others. It was said of Levi that he feared the Lord. *“The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity”* (Malachi 2:6). Wives can win their unbelieving husbands to the Lord by exercising godly fear, according to the apostle Peter: *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear”* (1 Peter 3:1-2).
- To enjoy divine deliverance. The fear of the Lord will give occasion to be delivered by God from many dangers in life. The midwives feared God, and did not kill the Hebrew babies according to Exodus 1:17. The Lord honored such fear, and gave them houses. *“And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses”* (Exodus 1:21).
- A desire for freedom. The longing to be free from embracing false doctrines is a motive for learning to fear God. One of the judgments of God against a people is to withdraw His word, and to leave people in their ignorance, and spiritual darkness. The continents of Africa and Asia testify to the horrible consequences of people who do not fear God. Those who fear the Lord will be allowed to know more about Him, even to the salvation of the soul. *Isaiah 50:10 Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant (Christ), that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

- To be possessed by God. To be owned of God is a great motive to learn to fear Him. Malachi 3:16, 17 says that, *“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”*