

Doctrine of Fear

The New Testament Teaching

1. Personal standards mixed with fear of social disapproval may prohibit holy behavior. When Joseph discovered Mary was with child he was fearful of taking her to wife.
 - *Matthew 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*

2. When a Christian's conduct is above reproach and the motives are pure in the sight of God there is no reason to fear the slanderous comments of others.
 - *Matthew 10:25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? 26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

3. Legitimate fear is a sanctified terror of the omnipotent God who has the power to destroy both body and soul in hell. God would have us fear Him so there can be freedom to love and obey Him with a clear conscience.
 - *Matthew 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.*

4. Illegitimate fear is emotion which produces daily apprehension because the mind says to itself that individuals are nothing more than an animal.
 - *Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows*

5. Unexplained phenomena causes the heart to be fearful.
 - Jesus walking on the water. *Matthew 14:26 And when the disciples saw him [Jesus] walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear...*
 - Zacharias being able to talk. *Luke 1:64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.*
 - *65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.*

- The healing of the sick. *Luke 5:25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. 26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.*
 - The casting out of demons. *Luke 8:35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*
6. God uses fear to help restrain many expressions of evil. The enemies of Christ were cautious in condemning His ministry because they feared the reaction of the people if they gave an answer to a question Jesus had for them concerning John the Baptist. The Lord asked what was the origin of his ministry. The Pharisees thought about the matter and decided they could not answer.
- *Matthew 21:26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.*
7. Holy angels can produce fear in the hearts of men.
- The unconverted. *Matthew 28:4 And for fear of him [the angel] the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.*
 - The converted. *Luke 1:12 And when Zacharias saw him [the angel], he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*
8. Holy angels try to calm the fears of the saints, both men and women, by assuring them of their good intentions.
- Women comforted. *Matthew 28:5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. Luke 1:30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.*
 - Men comforted. *Luke 1:13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*
9. Those who learn to fear God will enjoy divine mercy.
- Divine mercy. *Luke 1:50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.*
10. When a Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit and prays, God can be served without fear of men.

- *Luke 1:67 And his [John's] father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; 73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.*

11. Illegitimate fears are overcome embracing the following facts of faith.

- Knowing the Lord has a geographical and occupational will for every life. *Luke 5:10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*
- Knowing the Lord will avenge His own. *Luke 18:2-7 There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night*
- Remembering to Whom the believer belongs will help to calm fears. *Romans 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba [Papa], Father.*

12. Sometimes divine healing will come when fear is cast out and permission is granted to have faith in a healing miracle.

- *Luke 8:50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.*

It must be kept in mind that permission must be granted for faith to be exercised otherwise there is danger in developing faith in faith which is a work of the flesh. A perfect example of this can be found in the life of Catherine Marshall. After suffering for several years with a case of tuberculosis God gave Catherine permission to believe she would be healed. And so she was.

13. Remembering the promise of Jesus minimizes fear of the future. He will give the kingdom to those who love Him.

- *Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*
- *John 12:15 Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.*

- *Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:*
14. Those who will not fear God by choice might be forced to fear Him by circumstances. Jesus predicted a time when the hearts of men would fail them for fear “*and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken*” (Luke 21:26). In AD 70 this prophecy was literally fulfilled and will be fulfilled again at the Second Advent.
 15. If a conscious choice and circumstances do not cause the heart to learn to fear God the heart will become so adamant that even in death God is cursed. When Jesus was placed on the Cross he was crucified with two other men. One man began to curse and was rebuked for not fearing God. “*But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?*” (Luke 23:40) In *Romans 3:18* the apostle Paul writes of hardened individuals saying, “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*”
 16. Though the heart of the Christian might know the fear of men, it is still compelled to do what is noble and right illustrated in the actions of Joseph of Arimathaea.
 - *John 19:38 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.*
 17. When the heart is most afraid Jesus will come to comfort His people. He always has. He always will.
 - *John 20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*
 18. If the question was asked, “*How does a person learn to fear God?*” the *Scriptures* provide an answer.
 - The performance of miracles can cause the heart to learn to fear God. The miracles the apostles performed were designed to cause men to fear God. Miracles are not a form of mass entertainment or to attract a crowd. Miracles are meant to induce a holy terror of the Almighty. *Acts 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.*
 - Divine discipline can cause the heart to learn to fear God. The premature demise of Ananias and his wife illustrates this point. *Acts 5:5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.*

- Preaching the gospel can produce fear of God in the heart though it does not always lead to a conversion. *Acts 24:25 And as he [Paul] reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*
- Demonic activity not handled properly can cause the heart to fear God. *Acts 19:14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.*
- Remembering the severity and justice of God can induce the heart to learn to fear God. *Romans 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they [national Israel] were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:*
- Public accountability will produce a godly fear. *1 Timothy 5:20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*

19. When the church fears God there are some wonderful results.

- There is peace in the congregation as spiritual growth takes place. *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.*
- Holiness is perfected. *2 Corinthians 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.*
- Genuine repentance takes place. *2 Corinthians 7:11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*
- The capacity to receive a fallen brother is found. *2 Corinthians 7:15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.*

20. It is normal to be fearful due to the fall. Even the apostle Paul confessed to his personal fears.

- *1 Corinthians 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.*

21. Though natural fears are normal they are to be minimized and overcome by faith.

- Confidence that the will and work of the Lord are being done helps to overcome fears. *1 Corinthians 16:10 Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.*
- Suffering for the sake of righteousness tends to eliminate fear. The apostle Paul noticed that his suffering caused other believers to become bolder in witnessing. *Philippians 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

22. There are spiritual fears of concern that mark the sensitive and mature Christian's heart.

- The loss of the simplicity in Christ should be feared. *2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*
- A congregation marked by sins of the tongue and mind is something to fear. *2 Corinthians 12:20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:*
- Not receiving all the promises of God should be of spiritual concern. *Hebrews 4:1 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.*

23. The conclusion of the matter is that the Christian life is to be worked out in an atmosphere of fear and trembling, which means it is to be taken very seriously. *Philippians 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.*

23. A godly fear is not the same as a fleshly fear or the fear produced by self-doubts, sin, Satan or the world.

- *2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

26. Fleshly fear is characterized by the following.

- An inordinate terror of death. *Hebrews 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*
- An inducement of terror in others verbally or physically. *1 John 4:18 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.*

27. Christ has come to deliver individuals from the fears induced by the Fall.

- Christ delivers believers from fleshly fears by His faithful work of redemption. *Hebrews 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*
- Christ delivers believers from fleshly fears by encouraging them to pray and to affirm faith. *Hebrews 13:6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

28. Godly fear is visibly recognized.

- Godly fear is identified by gospel obedience. *Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*
- Godly fear will produce a sense of the presence of God. *Hebrews 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake :)*
- Godly fear is accompanied by a sense of humility. *1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*
- Godly fear will move to save others. *Jude 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*