

The Fear of God

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This month I want to examine two questions:

- 1) What does it mean to “fear God”?
- 2) What is meant by “the wrath of God”?



The Bible says, in many, many places, that we are to “fear” the LORD. Here are some sample passages:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)

... if you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding; if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures— then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:3-5)

O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. O fear the LORD, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against evil-doers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. (Psalms 34:8-16)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. (Psalms 111:10)



“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Jesus, in Matthew 10:28)

From these passages we can conclude that:

- 1) It is wise to fear God, and foolish not to
- 2) The fear of God can be gained and understood by seeking wisdom
- 3) The fear of the Lord can be taught, and therefore it can be learned.
- 4) The fear of the LORD can be practiced.
- 5) According to Jesus, it has something to do with God’s power to condemn—in other words, His judgment.

Does this mean that we are to be afraid of God? Isn’t He the loving, tender Father who desires us to be with Him forever in Heaven?

How about if we restate it ...

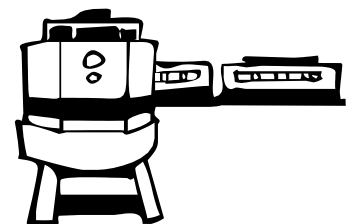
The fear of Jesus is the beginning of knowledge

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... which we can do, because Jesus said, many times and in several different ways, “I AM God,” and “The Father and I are one,”

So, are we to be afraid of Jesus?

Let me give you a mental picture that helps me— maybe it will help you, too. Picture a passenger train being pulled by a powerful locomotive. Now picture yourself in two situations: first, standing in the middle of the track as the train approaches, shouting, “Stop! I don’t want you to come here!” And, secondly, sitting inside one of the cars of the train, being carried along in safety.



In the first situation, would you fear the train? You had better fear it, because it will turn you into a mangled mess in a few seconds if you keep trying to resist it. In the second situation there is nothing to fear, because you are cooperating with the train.

Like all analogies, this one is not perfect, but it may be useful. Think of it this way: God is God, and you are not. He is infinitely bigger and stronger than you are, and He will eventually decide whether you go to

Heaven or to Hell. If you foolish enough to set yourself against His will, you had better be afraid!

If you “take refuge in Him,” as the psalm says, you will receive endless blessing. If you oppose Him, you will experience His wrath.

This brings us to the second question: what, exactly, is “God’s wrath”?

In the Old Testament there are many occasions when God became angry with the people of Israel because of their disobedience and stubborn rebellion. His anger was “kindled” against them, and He either brought disaster upon them or threatened to do so.

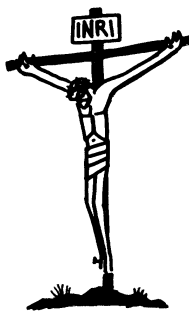
What does the New Testament say about God’s wrath? Here is what John the Baptist said, speaking as God’s prophetic voice:

“The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath.” (John 3:35-36)

And the Apostle Paul wrote this:

“... the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, ... but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good For God shows no partiality. (Romans 1:18, 2:9-11)

So, is “God’s wrath” punishment for sins, or is it simply the removal of God’s protection and blessing from those who won’t receive it? I think the answer is that these are really the same thing—that the consequences of separating ourselves from God are inevitably and always disastrous, whether He sends the disaster or simply allows it to happen. It may take a while for it to happen, because God gives us time to repent and turn to Him. But if we will not submit to His will—if we will not allow Him to save us, His way—ultimately we will experience His wrath, and it will be terrible and painful. Think of what Jesus suffered on the cross—one reason He had to suffer, I believe, was to show us how horrible it is to endure God’s wrath, which is the penalty we deserve for our sins.



The bottom line, dear brothers and sisters, is that we must—we must—either accept God’s grace, or suffer His wrath. It’s a simple choice, really. Do you want to live as God’s child, submitted to His will

(which is always for your good); or would you rather reject His salvation and suffer the consequences?

Be in awe of God’s power and majesty and goodness, but do not be afraid of Him. He loves you very, very much. In the person of His Son, Jesus, God suffered horribly and died for you, and rose from death to conquer death forever. You can trust in God’s love and mercy—those will never fail. But be very afraid of the consequences of rejecting Him.

I say to you, as Joshua said to the people of Israel long ago, “**Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve ... but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.**” (Joshua 24:15)



One final thought: this is a real choice. It’s literally a choice between life and death. You can’t be safe by pretending, because God knows where your heart is. Read these words of Jesus:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’ Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!” (Matthew 7:21-27)

I pray for you all, and for myself, that we will always be wise enough to receive God’s grace, and try to obey Him, wholeheartedly and with thanksgiving. I pray that we will be wise enough to be afraid of suffering the consequences of rejecting Him.

“Seek first the Kingdom of God.” Don’t be afraid to run to Him. Be very afraid of running away from Him.

Peace—

Brother Roland

Just so you know that the fear of God is a serious subject, these verses are just part of what the Bible says about it (read them):

- (Deu 6:2) so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments ..., so that your days may be long.
- (Deu 6:24) Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive....
- (Deu 10:12) So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,
- (Deu 10:20) You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear.
- (Deu 17:19) It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes,
- (Deu 25:18) how he attacked you on the way, when you were faint and weary, and struck down all who lagged behind you; he did not fear God.
- (Deu 31:12) Assemble the people—men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns—so that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God and to observe diligently all ... of this law,
- (Deu 31:13) and so that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess."
- (Josh 4:24) so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, and so that you may fear the LORD your God"
- (1 Sam 12:14) If you will fear the LORD and serve him and heed his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well;
- (1 Sam 12:24) Only fear the LORD, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you.
- (2 Chr 14:14) They defeated all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD was on them. They plundered all the cities; for there was much plunder in them.
- (2 Chr 17:10) The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands around Judah, and they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.
- (2 Chr 19:7) Now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the LORD our God, or partiality, or taking of bribes."
- (2 Chr 19:9) He charged them: "This is how you shall act: in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart;
- (2 Chr 26:5) He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.
- (Job 4:6) Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?
- (Job 15:4) But you are doing away with the fear of God, and hindering meditation before God.
- (Job 28:28) And he said to humankind, "Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."
- (Psa 19:9) the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
- (Psa 22:23) You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
- (Psa 25:12) Who are they that fear the LORD? He will teach them the way that they should choose.
- (Psa 27:1) The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- (Psa 33:8) Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
- (Psa 34:11) O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- (Psa 36:1) Iniquity speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts; there is no fear of God before their eyes.
- (Psa 55:19) God, who is enthroned from of old, will hear, and will humble them— because they do not change, and do not fear God.
- (Psa 111:10) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.
- (Psa 112:1) Praise the LORD! Happy are those who fear the LORD, who greatly delight in his commandments.
- (Psa 115:11) You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.
- (Psa 115:13) he will bless those who fear the LORD, both small and great.
- (Psa 118:4) Let those who fear the LORD say, "His steadfast love endures forever."
- (Psa 135:20) O house of Levi, bless the LORD! You that fear the LORD, bless the LORD!
- (Prov 1:7) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- (Prov 2:5) then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.
- (Prov 3:7) Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
- (Prov 8:13) The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.
- (Prov 9:10) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
- (Prov 10:27) The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.
- (Prov 14:2) Those who walk uprightly fear the LORD, but one who is devious in conduct despises him.
- (Prov 14:26) In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and one's children will have a refuge.
- (Prov 14:27) The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, so that one may avoid the snares of death.
- (Prov 15:16) Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.
- (Prov 15:33) The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility goes before honor.
- (Prov 16:6) By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one avoids evil.
- (Prov 19:23) The fear of the LORD is life indeed; filled with it one rests secure and suffers no harm.
- (Prov 22:4) The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.
- (Prov 23:17) Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always continue in the fear of the LORD.
- (Eccl 8:12) Though sinners do evil a hundred times and prolong their lives, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they stand in fear before him,
- (Eccl 12:13) The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone.
- (Isa 11:2) The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- (Isa 11:3) His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;
- (Isa 33:6) he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure.
- (Acts 9:31) Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.
- (2 Cor 5:11) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences.
- (2 Cor 7:1) Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.
- (Rev 14:7) He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

Fear of God

The Bible has many stories of people who feared God and tried to act in accord with His will. It also has stories of people who did not fear God. In general things didn't work out very well for them.

Puzzle:

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Words:

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