

Boo!

The Place of Fear in Religion

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

The primary Hebrew word for fear: **יָרָא**, *yare*; a primitive root; to *fear*, moral to *revere*; causative to *frighten*: - affright, be (make) afraid, dread (-ful), (put in) fear (-ful, -fully, -ing), (be held in) reverence, respect—as in love toward a father.

The Greek word is **φόβος** / **φοβέομαι** and it is used to describe: fear, dread, terror, reverence, and awe.

The idea of fear is crucial in religion. In Christianity, however, extremes often dominate thinking. Hell fire and damnation is not to rule, but neither is a sugary love that ignores the place of fear. What do we need to know if we are to be balanced?

1. Fear Comes Before Grace (Isa. 6:1-8)
2. Fear Comes Before Knowledge (Prov. 1:7)
3. The Word of God Brings Fear (Deut. 31:10-13)
4. The Fear of the Lord Creates a Hatred for Evil (Prov. 8:13; 16:6)
5. Fear Comes Before Love (I Jn. 4:18)
6. The Fear of the Lord is Never to be Totally Removed (Acts 9:31; Matt. 10:28)
7. Our Salvation is to be Worked Out With Fear and Trembling (Phil. 2:12)
8. An Aspect of Fear is removed by Love (I Jn. 4:18)
9. An Aspect of Fear is Essential (Ecc. 12:13-14)

The balanced place of fear involves a variety of components relating to different places we might be in life.

1. Outside of Fellowship With God, Dread and Terror are Appropriate
2. Part of our Movement Toward God involves Dread and Terror
3. We Must Always Recognize That to Rebel Against God is to Be Immediately in Peril
4. Yet, the Aspect of Fear we Develop as Faithful Children of God Leans Heavily Toward Awe, Respect and Reverence—What Fear Becomes When it is Balanced by Love
5. For the Christian, Fear is Much Like the Respect a Child is to Have for a Parent

Do we need to fear God? The answer depends on our relationship with Him and the appropriate aspect of fear we need to embrace. As we grow in our love for God and deepen our relationship with Him, terror is replaced by awe and respect.