

Knowing The Fear of The Lord We Persuade Men

II Corinthians 5:10-11

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The fear of God was a central doctrine in the early church, as in the Old Testament. Unbelievers and believers alike were taught to fear Him. None but a rank fool would deal frivolously with God. It was that very fear that drew people for salvation and kept them obedient.

Salvation doesn't come from wanting to join the fun and end emotional pain - it comes when the heart cries out for deliverance from sin! The contemporary user-friendly movement aims for just the opposite. Rather than arousing fear of God, it attempts to portray Him as fun, jovial, easygoing, lenient, and even permissive. Haughty sinners who ought to approach God in terror (cf Luke 18:13) are emboldened to presume on His grace. Sinners hear nothing of divine wrath. This is as wrong as preaching rank heresy.

As we learn from the account of Ananias and Sapphira, God's wrath is not to be taken lightly. Peter wrote, "If [judgment] begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1Pet. 4:17). Paul spoke of divine wrath as one of the primary motivations for evangelism: "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).

--John MacArthur, Ashamed of The Gospel

The Fear of the Lord, Two Kinds of Fear

In the Old Testament, the fear of the Lord is used as a designation of true piety (Prov. 1:7; Job 28:28; Ps. 19:9). It is a fear conjoined with love and hope, and is therefore not a slavish dread, but rather reverence as to a father. (Compare Deut. 32:6; Hos. 11:1; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8.) God is called "the Fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42, 53), i.e., the God whom Isaac feared. A holy fear is enjoined also in the New Testament as a preventive of carelessness in religion, and as an incentive to penitence (Matt. 10:28; 2 Cor. 5:11; 7:1; Phil. 2:12; Eph. 5:21; Hebrews 12:28, 29).

However, there is fear not coupled with love and trust, it can lead only to terror and despair. James tells us that the demons believe that there is one God—and shudder in fear (Jas. 2:19). The writer to the Hebrews speaks of covenant breakers, apostates, for whom "no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God" (Heb. 10:26-27).

What Jesus Taught about the Fear of the Lord

- Matt. 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
- Luke 12:4-5 :4 "And I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more they can do. :5 But I warn you who to fear: fear the One who after he has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes I tell you fear Him!"

What the New Testament Teaches about the Fear of the Lord

- Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.
- Acts 10:2, 22 Cornelius was a Gentile who feared the Lord.
- Acts 10:35 (Peter speaking :34-43); :34 "I most certainly understand [now] that God is not one to show partiality, :35 but in every nation the man who fears Him, and does what is right is welcome to Him."
- Rom. 11:20,21 :20 ..Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, and you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited but FEAR; :21 for if God did not spare the natural branches neither will He spare you.
- II Cor. 5:10-11 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but are made manifest to God;...
- II Cor. 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
- Eph. 5:21 ...and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.
- Phil. 2:12-13 ...work out your own salvation in fear and trembling; For it is God who is at work in you to, both to do and to work for [His] good pleasure.
- Col. 3:22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth,...fearing the Lord.
- Heb. 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
- I Pet. 1:17 And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay [on earth].
- I Pet. 2:17 Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.
- Rev. 11:18...and the time [came] for dead to be judged and [the time] to give their reward to Your bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Your name, the small and the great...

... We Persuade Men

- "Therefore," due to the judgment all will face (cf. II Thess. 1:5-10).
- God want us prepared to speak a good word for Jesus (I Pet. 3:15).
- The holiness of God is a sobering, terrifying thing (Isa. 6:1-5).
- The Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12).
- Our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28-29).