

# The Wonderful Fear of God

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## I. Intro

- a. Questions:
  - i. What is your first reaction when I tell you the title of this lesson?
  - ii. What role should fear play in our relationship with God?
  - iii. Should fear of God motivate us as Christians?
  - iv. What did Jesus say about fearing God?
  - v. Is fear of God something we need to overcome, or is something we should treasure and grow in?
- b. We will look at three men in the Old Testament who feared God and were commended for fearing God. We will compare these men to Jesus' (and New Testament) teaching, in order to better understand the role fear is to play in our lives as Christians.
- c. First, many places where God tells us that we should NOT fear. The things in this lesson can help us overcome such fears.
  - i. "the holy women who trusted God... being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror." (**1 Peter 3:5-6**)
  - ii. "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (**Luke 12:32**) (addressing fear and anxiety about having food to eat)
  - iii. "Therefore do not fear them." (**Matthew 10:26**) (those who will persecute you, like they persecuted me)

## II. Righteous Noah

- a. Read **Genesis 6:5-8, 13-18, 6:22-7:1**
  - i. The One who had made heaven and earth and had placed man over it all was grieved. God had demonstrated great compassion and kindness to man. This kindness was returned with wickedness.
  - ii. God tells Noah He will destroy the earth.
  - iii. God says He will save Noah, because he has been righteous before Him in this (wicked) generation.

- iv. Gives instructions to build the ark and to fill it with animals.
    - 1. 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, 30 cubits tall (450' x 75' x 45')
    - 2. A massive endeavor, that would have taken years to build.
    - 3. Imagine filling it with animals.
  - v. Noah believes God and builds an ark like God tells him to.
  - vi. God is very good and protects Noah, saves Him from destruction.
  - vii. Imagine what it must have been like when the waters came. Noah: fear, gratitude, "I am not crazy". An awesome sight and experience.
- b. **Question:** What motivated Noah to build the ark?
- i. "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." (**Hebrews 11:7**)
    - 1. "divinely warned" (not "lovingly encouraged")
    - 2. "moved with godly fear" to obey what God commanded. Confident God would do what He promised.
  - ii. Noah's neighbors did not have this godly fear
    - 1. "Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." (**Romans 3:15-18**, quoting **Isaiah 59:7,8** and **Psalms 35:2**)
    - 2. Example of not fearing authorities, which do not end well!
      - a. Giovanni's Roast Beef and Pizza (Saugus) and Mike's Famous Roast Beef & Pizza (North Reading) tax evasion.
      - b. Rude awakening, when IRS agent shows up at your house, then before the judge in a courtroom, then being hand-cuffed and led to prison. Thought they could ignore U.S. tax laws, no fear.
      - c. Such verdicts handed out so that others will fear; start following the laws. Deterrence.
      - d. We should learn from Noah's generation's example; know God will bring judgment; make sure we are

building our lives (ark) in accordance with His instructions and we bring in as many as possible.

3. Noah's godly fear (and righteous life) and ark building "condemned the world" (**Hebrews 11:7**). His life was a warning to others of the coming judgment.
4. Paul speaks of his motivation to warn others of God's coming wrath:
  - a. Read **2 Corinthians 5:9-11**
  - b. Paul understood the terror of the Lord: he was killing and imprisoning God's sons and daughters; and that all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.
  - c. "knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."
  - d. Paul goes on in the next paragraph:
    - i. "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." (vs. 14-15)
- c. **Question:** How did Noah stay righteous in such a wicked generation?
  - i. This is not easy! Easy to become like those we are around.
  - ii. He was "moved with godly fear".
  - iii. Read **2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1**
    1. This is written to Christians.
    2. God calls His people to be separate from the world (to become holy while amongst the people of this world)!
    3. God desires to be our Father and we are His sons and daughters. (Loving relationship.)
    4. "... having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
  - iv. But consider also Joseph's example of staying pure, when alone, and tempted to have sex with Potiphar's wife:

1. “ ‘Lie with me.’ But he refused and said to his Lord’s wife, ‘[your husband has entrusted everything in his house to me, except you]... How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’” (**Genesis 39:7-9**)
- v. “Now ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’ [quoting **Proverbs 9:10**] The recognition of sin leads us to repentance, and God bestows His compassion upon those who are repentant.”
  1. (*Irenaeus*, a Bishop/Elder in the Church of Lyons (modern day France) (c. 180, E/W) ,1.457.)
  2. This is a beautiful picture of how the fear of God is bound up with the love of God. It is not either/or!
- d. Fear plays an extremely important role to motivate us as Christians.
  - i. Not get pulled into the wickedness of the world.
  - ii. Perfecting holiness.
  - iii. To work really hard, and to persuade others to come into the ark before the Day of Wrath that is coming.

### III. Abraham, God’s Friend

- a. Read **Genesis 22:1-19**
- b. “God tested Abraham”. **Question:** What was the test?
  - i. “for now I know you fear God, since for My sake you have not spared your beloved son.”
  - ii. What does God desire?
    1. “You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart, from your whole soul, and from your whole power.” (**Deuteronomy 6:5**)
    2. God’s expectation: His children give them their whole hearts, souls, and power.
  - iii. Abraham’s test: does he fear God?! (This was demonstrated by him not loving his beloved son more than loving/obeying God.) Abraham passed the test! Realized God was good; had promised that out of His seed the nations would be blessed. Figured God would raise Isaac from the dead. Somehow, this would work out. (See **Heb. 11:17-19**)
- c. Jesus says and expects the same thing.

- i. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." (**Luke 14:26-27**)
- ii. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." (**Matthew 6:19-21, 24**)
- iii. People, endeavors, money – these cannot be first in our hearts, only God. This is true when we become Christians. Also, we are tested as we grow in the faith, and face new challenges in life (health, financial, children, grandchildren, church).
- iv. Will we continue to keep God first? Continue to live righteous lives.
- v. Will we fear God?
- vi. The test for Abraham was whether he feared God.
  1. The fear of God will help us keep our living Father in His proper place.
  2. **Question:** What about love? Shouldn't love be what motivates us as Christians?
  3. **Question:** Should we be motivated by fear to keep God first in our hearts?
- d. **Question:** How did Jesus motivate? (A few examples, study this out for yourself)
  - i. Warns of judgment / uses fear
    1. "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (**Matthew 5:20**)
    2. "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment.... Whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hellfire." (**Matthew 5:22**) (Go be reconciled before you bring your gift to the altar, lest you end up before the judge and are thrown into prison.)

3. “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”  
**(Matthew 5:29-30)**
  4. Jesus feels it is important to warn His followers about certain sins. He does not motivate them by His love for them in these passages!
- ii. But, motivates by the Father’s patience, kindness, and care
1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.... Those who mourn... the meek.... The merciful... the peacemakers....” **(Matthew 5)**
  2. Read **Matthew 5:43-48**
    - a. The Father causes the sun and rain on the just and unjust, you should too!
    - b. Be perfect, just as the Father in heaven is perfect.
  3. Read **Luke 12:22-34**
    - a. “Of how much more value are you than the birds?”
    - b. “If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He cloth you....”
    - c. “... your Father knows that you need these things....”
    - d. “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”
  4. God cares deeply about us. Wants us to understand this. Communicates this in so many ways. He motivates by His love AND by fear.
- iii. Sin is so deceptive. Many have fallen. We must understand God’s love and the fear of God. Need both motivations, I think!
1. “And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s works, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Christ....” **(1 Peter 1:17)**

2. “Therefore, my beloved, as you 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; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” **(Philippians 2:12-13)**
  3. Parable of the talents in **Matthew 25** (2 blessed, 1 punished)
- e. Did Abraham fear God, or love God? (How do we describe this relationship between God and Abraham, who feared Him?)
- i. “Are you not the Lord who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and gave it to the seed of Abraham Your friend forever?” **(2 Chronicles 20:7)** (King Jehoshaphat in prayer, crying out to God to remember His promise to protect Israel, as the enemy gathers around God’s people.)
  - ii. “And [Abraham] was called the friend of God.” **(James 2:23)**
  - iii. God tested His friend Abraham in his later years: would Abraham fear God?
    1. Abraham passed the test! May we keep passing the test, of fearing God, to obey faithfully as God’s friends!

#### IV. Fearless Obadiah

- a. Read **1 Kings 18:3-16** (**3 Kingdoms 18:3-16**)
  - i. Context: Elijah warns Israel there will be a great drought, no rain, except at Elijah’s word! Drought persists; Ahab wants to kill Elijah, but can’t find him.
- b. Summary:
  - i. Obadiah was in charge of Ahab’s house, but “feared the Lord greatly.”
  - ii. Obadiah had hidden 100 prophets from Ahab to keep them alive.
  - iii. Obadiah runs into Elijah, who tells him to go back to Ahab and tell him Elijah is here (so Ahab can meet him).
  - iv. Obadiah says, are you trying to kill me? (We will come back for you, you will be gone, and Ahab will kill me.)
  - v. Elijah says, no, I’ll stay here. Obadiah goes and returns with Ahab.
- c. What do we learn about Obadiah?
  - i. He fears the Lord greatly and has since he was a youth.

- ii. He risked his life to save God's prophets, and he risks it again, trusting Elijah will be there when they return.
- iii. His fear of God is greater than his fear of man!
- d. This is exactly what Jesus teaches
  - i. Read **Matthew 10:24-31**
  - ii. Jesus' message:
    - 1. You will be persecuted just like me.
    - 2. Do not fear those who persecute you.
    - 3. "And do not fear those who kill body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
    - 4. You are more valuable than many sparrows.
  - iii. If we fear God, we need not fear man! The blessing of fearing God.

## V. **Jesus – filled with the spirit of the fear of God**

- a. Jesus understood the fear of God.
  - i. Read **Isaiah 11:1-5**
    - 1. The Spirit of God came on Jesus at His baptism.
    - 2. Spirit of God is the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and godliness.. and
      - a. "The spirit of the fear of God shall fill him."
  - ii. Read **Isaiah 11:6-10**
    - 1. What did this spirit of the fear of God in Jesus produce?
      - a. Picture of peace and reconciliation (animals that usually devour each other, living at peace with one another)
      - b. "the whole world shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord..."
      - c. Jesus's reign over the entire world.
      - d. This is exactly what happened, as prophesied.
  - iii. **Hebrews 5:7-8**



1. "... who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son...."
- b. Jesus was also filled with God's love. (Both/and)
  - i. Jesus' prayer in **John 17:24-26**
    1. Jesus longs that we are with Him and the Father at the end.
    2. He told us to fear God. He feared God. And yet, He is also very confident that
      - a. "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" and
      - b. He prays that "the love with which You loved me may be in them, and I in them."
  - c. Jesus understood both the love of God and the fear of God. Both played an important role in His relationship with God.
  - d. **Question:** How are we doing in embracing both the fear and love of God, as Jesus' followers?

## **VI. Who Will be there on the Last Day? (The bride of Christ, His servants who fear Him)**

- a. We began in Genesis, with Noah's fear of God, which motivated him to live a righteous life in a wicked time, as well as to engage in a massive endeavor, to obey God and build an ark, to save himself and his family.
- b. We saw Abraham, God's friend, who put nothing before God, trusted God, faithful, and obeyed. Abraham passed the test: feared God! Abraham (and all nations) were blessed.
- c. We saw Obadiah's fear of God, which made him fearless before men.
- d. We looked at how Jesus grasped both the love of and fear of God, how he motivates us to grasp both as well, so we might be perfect like the Father.
- e. Let us look now at a picture of the Last Day. Read **Revelation 19:1-9**
  - i. Picture of God avenging His enemies and bringing about justice against those who had murdered His saints, His beloved sons and daughters.
  - ii. Twenty-four elders (and four creatures) worshipping before the throne of God.

- iii. “Then a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!’”
- iv. “Be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”
- v. The Church is “arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright...” and “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”
- vi. May we fear Him; may we love Him as a bride loves her Husband; may we be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory in this wonderful fear!