

# SPEAKING OF FEAR

## INTRODUCTION

The origin of human fear was the direct result of human disobedience to a known command of God. When Eve, then Adam, disobeyed God by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they suddenly realized that they were naked. They certainly didn't want God to see their nakedness, so they covered themselves with coverings of fig leaves sewed together. However, out of **fear** that they would be discovered as having been naked, they hid from God. When God pursued them, He said to Adam: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9) Adam's answer revealed **their fear** and **its motivation** for them **to hide from God**: "I heard Your voice in the garden, and **I was afraid** because I **was** naked; and **I hid myself**" (Genesis 3:10). (The Hebrew word from which "afraid," in verse 10, was translated is H3372 – **yare**, and bears the connotation of "the psychological reaction of "fear" – "being afraid of something or someone.")

The fear that Adam and Eve experienced was simple fear, by which a reaction of fear, dread or terror "may cause flight." (G5401) Other categories of fear include "the spirit of fear" and "the fear of the Lord." All three of these categories will be discussed in more detail.

## SIMPLE FEAR

A. As alluded to above, this is "the psychological reaction of "fear"; being afraid of something or someone." (H3372)

B. It is also fear (dread, terror) that "may cause flight" (G5401) to flee imminent danger. Sometimes our fear interprets an extraordinary manifestation of God's presence as an imminent danger from which we must run away.

**Example:** The children of Israel were terribly frightened as they witnessed the supernatural presence of God at Mt. Sinai when God spoke the Ten Commandments to them (Exodus 19:16-19 and 20:1-18). Their reaction to all of this was simple fear, which caused them to back off from the mountain and stand "afar off" (Exodus 20:18). They even told Moses that they would listen to him but not to God, "lest we die" (Exodus 20:19). Moses then tried to make them understand that they should **not** operate in simple fear but in God's fear (the fear of the Lord) "so that you may not sin" (Exodus 20:20).

## SPIRIT OF FEAR

A. This is the very debilitating fear of our arch adversary and intimidator – Satan. The Scripture in which "spirit of fear" is found is 2 Timothy 1:7 – "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." The designation of this fear as a spirit fear is unquestionably an **evil** spirit of fear and **not** the fear of the Lord.

B. The spirit of fear renders its victims ineffective and enslaved in "cowardice, unmanliness, and timidity" (G1167). It takes actual expulsion of the intimidating spirit to gain ultimate victory over the intimidator, whether the source of intimidation is Satan or human intimidators.

### C. Example of how Satan intimidates:

1. Zechariah 3:1-5: In this short segment of Scripture, Joshua the High Priest appears before the Angel of the Lord and Satan stood at his right hand to oppose him. The Lord rebuked Satan and cleansed Joshua of his iniquity, breaking Satan's power to intimidate.
2. Revelation 12:7-10: This segment simply identifies Satan as the accuser of the brethren, a function of Satan that likewise brings about an adversarial, intimidating relationship against us.

### **FEAR OF THE LORD**

A. This is the reverential fear of God by which we hold Him in highest respect and honor above all else. (G2124, G5399 and G5401) Reverential fear of God may be thought to be easier than other forms of fearing God. Not so! Reverential fear of the Lord is really moving toward the relationship to God that Jesus described when He said this: "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." (Luke 14:26)

**Note:** The word "hate" as used here does not mean to despise. Rather, it means to place our love for family members and self below our love of God. Our honor and love is to Him first.)

B. Reverential fear of the Lord is further described as follows:

1. It is a controlling of motive of life, in matters spiritual and moral (G5401)
2. It is **not** a mere "fear" of His power and righteous retribution. (G5401)
3. It is but a wholesome dread of displeasing Him, a "fear" which banishes the terror that shrinks from His presence (G5401). It is also identified as **Godly fear** that "may be before you, so that you may not sin" (Exodus 20:20) and not the fear that caused the congregation of Israel to run away from God's supernatural presence at Mt. Sinai when He came down upon the mountain to speak the Ten Commandments to them (Exodus 19:16-19 and 20:1-18).
4. It is a careful working out of our own salvation with "**fear and trembling**" (Philippians 2:12) (G5401 and G2192 – fear) (G5156 – trembling) and to be obedient to your bosses "with fear (G5401) and trembling (G5156), in sincerity of heart, as to Christ" (Ephesians 6:5).

**Note:** (G5156) means to be with fear and trembling, and is used to describe the anxiety of one who distrusts his ability completely to meet all requirements, but religiously does his utmost to fulfill his duty to God and to his bosses. This word means "a trembling" and occurs in Mark 16:8; 1 Corinthians 2:3; 2 Corinthians 7:15; Ephesians 6:5; Philippians 2:12."

We do have a certain level of anxiety ("trembling") when we are not sure we can meet God's standards for our daily salvation or the standards of our boss for fulfilling our work requirements. But the one who, being uncertain of his ability to meet these requirements of God or of his boss, is exceedingly wise to turn completely to God for the help he will need to fulfill his duties to each.

5. It is also trembling at God's Word (H2730) (Isaiah 66:2). This is a trembling or fearing **not** to keep His Word, to suddenly see oneself as falling very short of fulfilling God's Word in his life.

**Example:** Isaiah, when before God in his vision of the Temple of God, saw the Lord and the angelic worship of God in that place. He was deeply touched by everything he saw and said, in deep contrition (and doubtless trembling): "Woe is me, for I am undone" and

“I am a man of unclean lips.” (Isaiah Chapter 6) Although Isaiah was a priest and a prophet, he suddenly saw himself as falling short of the holiness of God and made instant amends. So will it be for anyone who is “poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word.” (Isaiah 66:2)

6. The reverential fear of the Lord is especially well-defined by the Greek word **eulabeia** (G2124). “This word means apprehension, especially holy fear. (Mingled **fear** and **love** which, combined, constitute the piety of man toward God). The Old Testament places its emphasis on the **fear**, the New Testament on the **love**, though there was **love** in the **fear** of God’s saints then, as there **must** be **fear** in their **love now**.”

**It signifies caution, fear (Hebrews 5:7)** and Godly fear (Hebrews 12:28). Overall, it speaks of fear **in** our love; and of reverence and caution **with** our love.

This also indicates the need for both love and fear (of God) at any time in history. When either is over balanced, problems will become evident.

Love without fear produces lawlessness and fear without love produces legalism. It takes a proper balance of each to avoid the imbalances of either (Conceptual quote from John Bevere)

7. It is proven by obedience (Genesis 22:1-12)

When God tested Abraham’s fear of God, He told Abraham to kill his son Isaac and make of him a burnt sacrifice. Since it was irrational for Abraham to do such a thing, he found it necessary to obey God even when it didn’t make sense. Nevertheless, Abraham obeyed God to the very last second when God prevented him from actually killing Isaac. The Angel of the Lord said to Abraham: “...Now I **know** that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only Son from Me.” (Genesis 22:12)

Abraham’s proof that he feared God was his unconditional, immediate obedience to God even when God’s command was irrational and uncomfortable. But not only did Abraham prove his fear of the Lord by his obedience in this situation, scripture later reveals how he did it: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ **concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead**, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” (Hebrews 11:17-19)

While our fear of the Lord is proven by our obedience, our ability to obey can be restrained by a faith that does not conclude that God is able to handle the details (of a situation) that troubles us most.

#### C. Benefits of walking (living) in the fear of the Lord:

1. By it we hate evil (Proverbs 8:13)
2. by it we are enabled to depart from evil (Proverbs 16:6)
3. By it we receive help to keep from sinning (Exodus 20:20) (See also IV.B.3. – wholesome dread of displeasing God)
4. By it we learn to reverence God by **always** regarding Him as holy (Matthew 6:9). **And** by it we learn the wisdom of **never** treating God as common or ordinary as Nadab and Abihu did, to the loss of their lives (Leviticus 10:1-2)
5. By it we have the important beginnings of **knowledge** (Proverbs 1:7) and wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

**Special Note:** Those who have a **hatred of knowledge** and **refuse** to **choose** the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:29) bring upon themselves severe consequences (Proverbs 1:28)

6. By it, with humility, the fear of the Lord promises riches, honor and life (Proverbs 22:4)

7. When placed in the hearts of God's people, they will **not** depart from Him: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me." (Jeremiah 32:40)

8. "Who is the man that fears the Lord?" (Psalm 25:12)

a. Psalm 25:12-13)

(1) It is the man who is taught in the way of the Lord.

(2) It is the man who shall dwell in prosperity.

(3) It is the man whose descendants shall inherit the earth.

b. Psalm 25:14

(1) The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him.

**Note:** No one shares secrets with someone who is not a close friend. God is the same in this respect, reserving His secrets for His close friends – those who fear Him.

(2) God will show His covenant to those who fear Him – the hidden secrets of His covenant.

D. Other important characteristics of the fear of the Lord:

1. **Psalm 19:9** – It is **clean** (pure) – it is indispensable to cleansing us from all unrighteousness (see 1 John 1:9)

2. **Psalm 19:9** – It **endures forever** – it is for now **and** eternity.

### **CONTRADICTION???**

**1 John 4:18** – "There is **no fear** in love; but perfect love **casts out fear**, because **fear involves torment**. But **he who fears** has not been made perfect in love."

**The Problem:** The Greek word **eulabeia** (G2124) clearly means "mingled fear and love which, combined, constitute the piety of man toward God." And yet, 1 John 4:18 would seem to say that **no fear** can exist in perfect love.

**The Answer:** The Greek word **phobos** (G5401) can mean fear, dread or terror **and** can also mean reverential fear of God. In the context of this verse, it should be clear that the fear that is to be expelled in favor of love is fear, dread and terror as well as the spirit of fear. But the fear that is always to be retained is the reverential fear of the Lord.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Finally what must we do to gain an understanding of the fear of the Lord” “My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; **THEN YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THE FEAR OF THE LORD**, and find the knowledge of God.” (Proverbs 2:1-5)