

What is the Fear of the Lord?



1 Angelic Encounter on Christmas Eve

Several years ago, during a night watch in the old GIHOP Mia 'saw' an angel who was bending towards Paul as if wanting to talk to him. It was Christmas eve, and Paul was half asleep. Suddenly he awoke with all his senses up and vibrating and his mind crystal clear. Then he was given several Bible verses. Mia 'saw' but Paul 'heard', and they did not speak to each other.

The Scriptures given to Paul were Rev 4:5 & 5:6. And he was given a question and the answer: *'Why are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth? To find a worthy people to land upon in the last days.'* (Gen 8:8-11; John 1:33; C.f. 2 Chr 16:9)

2 What are the Seven Spirits of God?

Isaiah 11:1-3 is the prophetic preview of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit upon Him. The seven-fold manifestation of the Spirit upon Jesus Christ was:

- i. The Spirit of the Lord (who speaks in the 1st Person)
- ii. The Spirit of wisdom
- iii. The Spirit of understanding
- iv. The Spirit of Might
- v. The Spirit of Counsel
- vi. The Spirit of knowledge
- vii. The Spirit of the fear of the Lord

The KEY to accessing the seven-fold Spirit of God is 'The fear of the Lord.' (c.f. Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10; 14:26-27). The emphasis falls on v3 – *'His [Jesus] delight is in the fear of the Lord.'* The culminating manifestation of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus was the fear of the Lord. Jesus delighted in the fear of the Lord. What a surprising statement!

3 Misunderstanding of the Fear of the Lord

Often the subject of fearing God invokes negative reactions from Christians. *'Christians who are truly saved should not fear the Lord at all.'* Is this true? It is difficult to wrap our minds around pure love and pure fear existing together in the same relationship. But if we are to have a biblical understanding of God rather than a sentimental one, we must.

How many of us are comfortable with all three following phrases describing godly Christians:

- i. **'reverence and godly fear'** (Heb 12:28-29) - *'Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.'*
- ii. **'fear of the Lord'** (1 Pet 1:17-19) - *'And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves through the time of your stay here in fear, knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your father, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.'*
- iii. **'terror of the Lord'** (2 Cor 5:11) - *'Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...'* (2 Cor 5:11)

What does it mean 'Jesus delighted in the fear of the Lord'? How do you delight in the fear of the Lord?

Very few believers have a clear idea of what it means.

4 Freedom from the Fear of Men

'And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' (Matt 10:28)

- i. Jesus did not say this to the sinners as an evangelistic message, but to His twelve disciples before sending them out to preach the gospel.
- ii. The context of this message was the fear of potential persecution for preaching the gospel, the fear of unknown dangers, and the fear of lack (10:24-31).

Jesus is saying, *'Let me give you the motivation that will cure you of the fear of men and the fear of lack. That is to truly fear God.'* When we truly fear God who holds us in His hands, we do not need to fear anyone or anything else. This so simplifies our life and frees us from the complex and powerful fears that tear us from the inside and pull us in multiple directions. *The only person you have to truly please in life is God.* This is *'delighting in the fear of the Lord.'* Why are we often fearful when the Bible says, 'Do not be afraid' 336 times? Why do we get easily offended and wounded by the opinions of others? Because we fear many things that are not God. Because we do not truly fear God. The faith of the patriarch Isaac was described as **the Fear of Isaac.** (Gen 31:42)

'For you did not receive the spirit of bondage (slavery, NASV) again to fear.' (Rom 8:15)
God never produces slaves. He produces sons who want to please the Father.

'God did not give us the spirit of timidity (fear) but love, power, and self-control (sound mind).' (2 Tim 1:7)

'The fear of men brings snare but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted.' (Prov 29:25)

'In the fear of the LORD, there is strong confidence.' (Prov 14:26)

What is at the heart of the fear of the Lord? The first commandment. *'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 'You shall have no other gods before Me.'* (Ex 20:2-3). We give God the first and the highest place in our hearts without any competition. In reality, what or whom you fear the most becomes your god.

5 Freedom from Religious Fear and Hypocrisy

Isaiah warns about false religious fears which disguise themselves as the fear of the Lord.

'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honour Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.' (Is 29:13)

'Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, and their works are in the dark; They say, 'Who sees us?' and, 'Who knows us?' (Is 29:15)

These are the inner thoughts of 'religious actors' who espouse deep spiritual things, yet their lives and their inner motives are dark. We can easily think of some names, but we will be wiser to watch our own souls. We too can easily become potential religious actors.

'Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'There people draw near to Me with their mouths and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men...For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. There are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.' (Matt 15:7-9, 19-20)

Religious hypocrisy is extremely deceptive. We need the fear of the Lord to be free from such self-deception. C.f. David's prayer Ps 19:12-14. The key is the fear of the Lord in v.9.

'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.' (Ps. 19:12-14)

'The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever...' (Ps. 19:9)

טהור *tâhôr* means clear, pure in a physical sense as opposed to filthy, soiled. The fear of the Lord will cleanse us, like antiseptic cleanses away germs.

'Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.'
(Ps 51:6)

The second and the third commandments are the practical outworking of the first commandment in a believer's life (c.f. Ex 20:4-7). No carved image can stand in God's place because the only true representation and God's perfect image is His Son, Jesus Christ. We must not take the LORD's name in vain. We are to be honest and truthful from the heart and we must refuse to use God's name in a self-serving way. C.f. *'God spoke to me'* to justify what I want to do, or to draw attention to what I want to say. This is taking God's name in vain, and we need cleansing from this pandemic in the church today.

6 At the Very Heart of the First Three Commandments is the Very Nature of God's Love

Our God is a jealous God (Ex 20:5).

'Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.' (Ex 34:14)

This is one of the reasons why Christians should fear the Lord. Not because God is capricious or vengeful. Not even just because God is powerful. But because of His character – He is completely pure, therefore the love with which He loves us is not weak or sloppy, but fiery and consuming demanding the first place in our lives. We cannot have any other kind of love, there is no possibility of having any other kind of relationship with God that is real. With God, it is all or nothing. Anything less than this will be utterly scorned (Songs 8:6-7). It shows the folly of the modern concept of open marriage.

That is why Israel was the most blessed nation and the most cursed nation of all (Heb 12:18-29). Israel rejected the fear of the Lord and fell fast into idol worship, and the nation was burned by the jealous consuming fire of God. So the Church is told to serve God with reverence and godly fear for our God is [still] a consuming fire.

This is the Lord's treasure which God wants to impart to us who live in the end times. Jesus' prayer was heard because the fear of the Lord was upon Him. *'...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, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.'*
(Heb 5:7-8)