
Words of Truth

Happy Is The Man That Feareth

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Fear is a biblical subject that has to be studied, discussed, and taught about carefully. The reason for that is, there are types of fear that are unacceptable to God (Revelation 21:8). For example, as faithful followers of Christ, we are not supposed to compromisingly fear what man can do to us (Matthew 10:22-28 and Hebrews 13:5-6). Yet, there is a certain type of fear toward man that we should have. For example, we should fear being disobedient to civil laws, that are in accordance with the law of the Lord, because of the consequences we would face (Romans 13:1-7).

The subject matter of fear, regarding our Lord, is not all that easy to understand. There are clear instructions to fear God (Psalms 89:7, Philippians 2:12, Hebrews 4:1, and I Peter 2:17). However, we also have this inspired statement that makes this subject matter somewhat confusing: *“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love”* (I John 4:14-18).

When you study this subject matter out entirely, you are left to conclude that our relationship with God should not be one of constant fear, but of love (Mark 12:29-30 and I Corinthians 8:3). The kind of love that obeys Him (I John 5:1-3) and thus we are confident in our salvation rather than fearful of destruction (I John 5:13). In the first century, when the Holy Spirit was given to those whom obeyed the Gospel (Acts 8:12-24, Acts 19:1-7, and Ephesians 1:13-14); that is what the Spirit confirmed to those saints (Romans 8:15-17).

The right kind of fear exists when we consider what would happen if we disobeyed Him (Hebrews 12:28-29). Proper fear is the kind of fear a child should have of his or her parents if he or she were to disobey their rules (Leviticus 19:3). If we were to only fear the Lord, and fear Him in all ways, terror would take hold of us (Psalms 119:120). God does not desire us to walk about every moment of our lives fearing the return of Christ and the Judgment Day (John 14:1-3, II Peter 3:10-14, Jude 1:21, and I John 3:1-3). The Lord wants us to be of good comfort (II Corinthians 13:11). So, where is the balance? How do I fear and remain joyful?

In Fear And Joy At The Same Time

Solomon wrote: *“Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief”* (Proverbs 28:14). In a Psalm we read: *“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling”* (Psalms 2:11). In my studies of the Scriptures, there are a few passages that have helped me grasp the balance of fear and joy in that fear.

As I indicated earlier in this study, the proper fear of God is about the consequences of disobedience (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). The tribe of Judah was taught this concerning what was to come to them after Babylonian captivity: *“And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me”* (Jeremiah 32:36-40).

Fear drives one to learn about God (Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, and Proverbs 9:10). Then, fear drives one to continually obey God. Notice: *“And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not”* (Exodus 20:18-20).

If you know you’re going to be saved (I John 2:28), through your obedient love (John 14:15); you’ll fear consequences of sin. Yet, you’ll not be afraid of the Lord. What you should be afraid of is disappointing Him, by violating His will. For if you disobey Him, there will be Hell to pay for it (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). Therefore, fear brings joy because fear moves you to obey the Lord and continually serve Him. Such obedience brings happiness and joy to your life (Psalms 35:9, Proverbs 29:18, Isaiah 61:10, and I Peter 1:3-9).

Conclusion

Jesus died to relieve the faithful from the fear of death that He likened unto bondage (Hebrews 2:9-18). Now, if fear has moved you to continual obedience, you can have a certain mindset of looking forward to death (Romans 8:28-39 and Philipians 1:21-25). Therefore, fear God so that you obey Him and don’t go to Hell (Luke 12:5). Let that motivating fear be a source of joy as in such a state of that fear, you KNOW you’ll not err and lose your reward!